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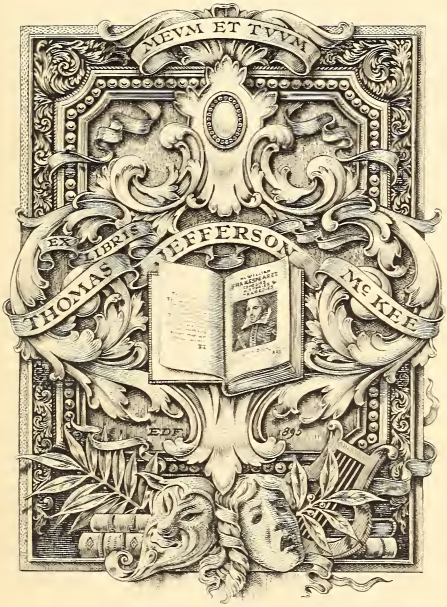
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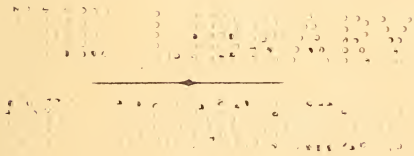
CHARLES LAMB.

BY

THOMAS CRADDOCK.



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PREFACE.

We have probably now received all that is material towards forming a judgment on the life and character of Charles Lamb. We may continue to obtain short anecdotes and reminiscences from some of his old companions, who are still alive; but, when we consider, that the youngest of these companions are now old men, we can hardly expect that any really new impress will be given to the impression of his life and character, already formed. He has been dead more than thirty years, and such a period commonly exhausts all that is valuable in the recollections of the associates of an important man, and all that is worth publishing of his remains. We are often supplied, immediately on the death of a

favorite author or statesman, with all that industrious admirers can scrape together. Reminiscences, Letters, Journals, Diaries are sometimes expanded over a dozen volumes, so that it becomes a task to read, and a task to digest what you have read. This, however, is not the case with Lamb. He wrote little, and what he did write was published before his death. He was too humble to practice the vanity, which is always more or less present in Diary writers. He never kept letters or manuscripts that fell into his hands. Thus, in his case, there was little material for the biographer, except what he could collect of Lamb's letters from his various correspondents. But he had a host of admirers, who have, in a variety of forms, published their opinions and recollections of him; and these opinions and recollections, together with his letters, are the material out of which we are enabled to form our estimate of the man.

The first of these in importance is Talfourd's life and letters of his friend, which were published in two divisions; the first, two years after Lamb's death; and the second, seven years after the first. But this work is clumsy in its construction, since it goes twice over the same ground, corrects in the second portion what it mis-stated in the first, gives us mutilations of the correspondence; and altogether dissatisfies a reader, who wishes to see the man as he was, not as his biographer thinks he ought to be. Still this is the book whence we must always seek the most authentic image of Lamb. When the mutilated letters are restored, we shall not need much to complete our ideas of their author from them alone. The next writer who has given us the clearest notion of Lamb is Patmore. In his "My Friends and Acquaintance," he enters on many important details; and, as is his wont, gives an elaborate description of

peculiarities and habits. Cyrus Redding, in his Past Celebrities; Procter, in his brief life of Lamb; W. C. Hazlitt, in his life of his grandfather, William Hazlitt; Thornton Hunt, in his Letters of Leigh Hunt; Alsop, in his Letters and Conversations of Coleridge; besides casual papers in various Reviews and Magazines, form the remaining material for the life of Lamb. Thus, merely from the broken nature of these materials, the writer of the following pages conceived that a work, which should be in some measure dependent on all that had been published for its facts, would not be unacceptable to the general reader. He has, therefore, endeavored to separate the grain from the chaff, and to give a continuous narrative, embracing the literary as well as the domestic life of the man.

However, the following work would never probably have been published but for one circumstance. 'Mine own familiar friend,'

Wm. Dawbarn, Esq., of Elmswood, near Liverpool, found it necessary, in the development of an extensive mercantile business at Liverpool, to establish a private Printing Office on his premises. Mr. Dawbarn used his Press, during leisure intervals, for printing lectures on Government, Conduct, and Example; which he had delivered several years ago. When this work was finished, he offered the Press to me, and I accepted the boon. I have, therefore, to thank Mr. Dawbarn for hazarding a publication, which I should never have been sanguine enough to hazard myself.

Liverpool, December, 1867.

CHARLES LAMB.

The period comprised between 1800 and 1830 is one of the great eras of English Literature. It may compete with the other two great eras of Elizabeth and Anne without any allowance or drawback, for it is distinguished by some works which are likely to last as long as some of the greater writings in either of the preceding periods. The rapidity with which its strength grew, its sudden maturity and hasty decline, are in all respects similar to either of the former eras. The great Pericles era of Greece, the Horace era of Rome, the Moliere era of France, the Cervantes era of Spain, the Goethe era of Germany, the Dante era of Italy, and the Shakspere era of England, have all of them common features. They were all rapid of growth and of decay. They were all comprised in a period not greater than a single life-time. They were all marked by a comprehensiveness as well as a splendour of ability. They all so astonished and delighted mankind that they left succeeding generations little else than to read their writings, to imitate them, and comment on them. It would be an interesting inquiry, even if it promised no reward, to trace how it is that genius comes in societies;—that it is not so much a comet, astonishing now and then, as a fall of meteors, belonging to periods and companionships; that it is essentially a social—not a solitary quality; that it strikes out its scintillations as it were by contact; that it

cannot endure long exposure; but like the aloe, when it has blossomed once, sleeps a hundred years before it gathers strength sufficient for another specimen of its splendour.

Herodotus, Thucydides, Sophocles, Euripides, Æschylus, Phidias, Pericles, were all alive together. In like manner Horace, Livy, Virgil, and Martial were contemporaries. Cervantes, Lope, Mariana, Calderon, Murillo, Velasquez make up the Spanish group; and Kant, Lessing, Jean Paul, Schiller, Goethe, Fichte, Heyne are the great German contemporaries. The great Italian cluster is that of Machiavelli, Ariosto, Titian, Raffælle, Michael Angelo, Bramante, which, though not the same names as Byron instances, might, as he boldly says, have furnished forth creation. If then we estimate what a loss literature and human nature would suffer, if any one of these life-long clusters of intellects were to be taken from us, we may estimate the primary importance of particular short periods, in intellectual history, over the long intervals, which, like star points in the heavens, carry the eye along from constellation to constellation. Sometimes these ganglions, as we may name them, of the intellectual nerve, are distinguished by some particular kind of genius, as that of our Shakspere era, during which dramatic art, to the exclusion of almost every other, prevailed. The German era bore a more distributive character. Nothing predominated; but Dramatic, Fictive, Philosophic genius had all their separate representatives in Schiller, Jean Paul, and Kant, as well as their great general representative in Goethe. In Italy the Architect and the Painter bore away the greater distinctions.

But these periods, so brief and so conspicuous, are almost our only sources of intellectual property. They are succeeded by long interregna of busy feebleness and industrious obscurity. The periods of originality and greatness fall like a tropic sun into night without twilight; and the interval, that establishes nothing, is often the interval that pretends to every thing. It never knows, and consequently never confesses its worthlessness. It is only by tracing the bright that we detect the obscure, and know that dreariness ever had existence. When greatness has ceased, it has generally done all that can be done with the particular form of knowledge it has adopted. When the world has obtained a Prometheus, or the Georgics, or a Don Quixote, or a Faust, or a Tartuffe, or the Transfiguration, it is satisfied. Intellect may strain, but it is the frog straining against the ox. There is exhaustion in a masterpiece. And though we can perceive no reason that the production of Othello or Twelfth Night should act as weariness on Dryden and Shadwell, yet the effect is the same as if they had worn themselves down, and had only the residue of intellect to work with. The stilted efforts of the inferior are as the exhaustion and weariness of the superior. When Dryden left the path of Shakspere, he became a terror and a power. But while he ranted on the stage, he was "dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage."

While then the periods of genius glow with special, and often with rival brilliancies, the intervals between them are occupied with a succession of imitators and disciples, who, wanting the original ability, and perhaps

opportunities, of their masters, make, for a time, the greater works, that preceded them, stale and neglected from their hacknied use of them; from the base and unworthy imitations which they make of them; from the cold methodical, and prolix trifles, which, as it were, spring out of the fiery, original, and terse masterpieces of genius. This result of the popularity of genius is so general, that we may be sure it is not an accident, but a law, and it seems to have the effect of fallowing the soil of thought, and preparing it for another crop. The weeds that spread over the surface of the recent harvest field are the means of their destruction. They exhaust themselves in uncultured growth, and are ploughed up to be destroyed before new seed begins to show itself.

If it were necessary to adduce instances of what has been said, we might do so from any literature that was worthy of the name. The fragmentary remains of the secondary literature of Greece and Rome afford evidence of this fact, although the greater part of this secondary literature has perished from neglect. But among our own writers, the proof of works of this kind is abundant enough. The last seventy years of the eighteenth century are full of it. Only about half a dozen writers and thinkers of first-rate character occur during that long period of literary dulness, and their works were really little more than skilful imitations of predecessors. Nobody would dare compare the Rambler with the Spectator, or the Traveller with the Rape of the Lock, or Humphrey Clinker with Gulliver's Travels, or Sir Charles Grandison with Robinson Crusoe; though indeed the novel in the hands of

Fielding, history in the hands of Gibbon, and Philosophy in the hands of Hume belong to the first classes of their kinds. But the current literature of the era was miserable in the extreme. No such weak washy beverage was ever produced before, or has been since. The Della Cruscans finished the period appropriately enough, and by their strained, artificial namby-pamby, served to bring about that brilliant literary revolution, which prevailed during the first thirty years of this century.

More than one theory has been proposed to account for the difference which we perceive in the poetry of Scott, Coleridge, and Wordsworth from that of Mrs Robinson, Charlotte Smith, Whitehead, Hayley, Miss Seward, Greathead. These were popular writers at the end of the last century. They threw off volume after volume of verses, which were eagerly read and admired. Yet their productions are chiefly marked by insipid compliments, flimsy images, dull, stilted narrative, sentimental coxcombry, and, in general, by that kind of style which is the result, not of a natural impulse to speak, because nature has given the thoughts and the expression, but an ambition to speak, because former speakers have attained reputation and reward by that means. It was a morbid desire to be distinguished and original, without the necessary qualification for either. The Ode, the Elegy, the Sonnet were the favorite vehicles of the super-sentimentalists, who drew a large part of their inspiration from such subjects as loving blackbirds, deaths, births, and marriages, and old maidish prudery. Lines to Chloe on her marriage, and to Phillis on the death of her Linnet,

were the subjects that took place of the Ode to Eton College and the Hermit.

It has been often asserted, and generally believed, that the revolution which changed poetical taste from the style of Miss Seward to that of Wordsworth, was effected by the Percy ballads, which were first published in a collected form in 1765. Chevy Chase and Clym of the Clough are certainly very different productions from the Monody on Major Andre, or an Ode to Chloe. But it may very reasonably be doubted whether, after all, so much was owing to the Percy volume as has been attributed to it. The Percy productions were the natural productions of poets, surrounded with circumstances very different from those which surrounded Mrs. Robinson and the Della Cruscans, as they were called. That which we call nature in the Percy collection, was merely that peculiarity which results from the writer observing and putting down, without any anxiety about excellence or inferiority, what he sees, hears, and thinks. Now we are pretty sure that the Della Cruscans did the same, after their fashion. But while the Della Cruscans had been bred in the surroundings of artificial society, false sentiment, suppressed opinions, and made-up feelings, they gave expression to these uninteresting products of their education. They had no genius to soar above their age, nor had the writers of the Percy ballads. But while the Percy ballads had soared out of the age in which they had fallen, by the mere natural operation of time, the Della Cruscans were as trivial, as foolish, as pert, as ridiculous as the words and sentiments of any fop or

school-miss you could meet with at the time. We do not encourage this kind of representation of artificial society; because, though we follow it in real life, we, at the same time, are conscious of its silliness, and we are by no means anxious to have our folly preserved in amber. Make us better than we are if you please, but do not give us our likeness in our own false sickliness. The insipidity of reality can only be made palatable by time. If Della Cruscans had lived in the age of Henry the Third, they would have been studied and annotated. As they lived in the age of George the Third, they were rightly served by their successors, in being scorned and trampled on.

When, therefore, we attribute to the Percy volume all the merit of the poetical revolution, at the head of which Wordsworth stood, we ought to remember that Cowper had lived and written without its inspiration; that Rogers had published the Pleasures of Memory, and Crabbe his early poems, without any reliance upon it. Yet these writers show as much difference from the extravagant taste of their century, as Southey or Coleridge; and Cowper has never been moved an inch from his high position by all the various poetry of the early third of the nineteenth century. Crabbe, Rogers, Wordsworth, Scott, Southey, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Moore, Campbell, James Montgomery are the great poetical constellation of this remarkable period. In the first period of intellectual power, the drama had left nothing in its vicinity that dare compete with it. In the second, the poetry of life and observation prevailed, out of which grew the interregnum poetry of false sentiment and strained

compliment. In this third period, neither drama nor moral poetry had any chance, but narrative was the general subject from first to last of all. Yet of all these twelve poets no two can be grouped so closely together as Dryden and Pope, or Thomson and Cowper. Those who seem to have been influenced by the study of older and simpler literature are Wordsworth and Coleridge. If it is necessary to refer the inspiration of the others to any sources, it must be referred to some quite independent of the Percy ballads. Even Scott probably owed little of the direction of his genius to Chevy Chase. His mind was made up before he had received much influence from older ballads. Nature had prepared him for his work; and had there never existed a heroic ballad or a story of chivalry,—a minstrel or a Troubadour, he would, out of his own nature, have invented them, and we should probably have had the Lay and Marmion little different from the state in which they now exist. The tendency towards narrative and romance, which then set in, has gone on thickening to the present day. The great masters forming the group gave it every variety of expression. That which we are now burdened with, in the shape of novels and tales, sensation extravagancies, and overdrawn character, and unlikelihood of situation, are the mere spume and yeast from that great up-turn of intellect, which marked the first thirty years of the present century. We have nothing now that did not spring up then stronger and healthier. Perhaps Dickens is the only man of pure genius who has relied on himself that does not belong to it. Tennyson, of whom such extravagancies

have been said, is but an indifferent compound of Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth. Had these poets never written Tennyson would never have been a poet.

Though Poetry held the first place, and gave its distinguishing feature to this culmination of intellect, and was the power that transmitted its authority most directly into our future, it was accompanied by literary companions, well worthy of its excellence. The Novel, the Essay, History, Biography, and Science had all their high cultivators, and it is from this second division of the group that we propose to select an illustration of the originality and cultivation, as well as the thoroughness and ease of its great leaders. Indeed, the best prose of the vaunted prose of the age of Anne is not a whit more cultivated than the best prose of Lamb, Jeffrey, Gifford, Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt. While in variety, nature, freedom, and unconsciousness, if we may say so, the palm belongs to the modern group. Swift, Defoe, Addison, have features that are incomparable; but so have the writers we have named; and we will proceed in our illustration of one of these, not as a specimen of the whole, but as specimen of a feature in genius, of which neither our literature nor any other European literature affords a parallel example.

In Feb. 1775, the year in which the war of Independence in America commenced, Charles Lamb was born, in Crown Office Row, Middle. Temple. His father was the factotum of Mr. Salt, a bencher. He is described as Scrivener in the entry of his son as scholar of Christ's Hospital, so that his first services were doubtless those of

clerk, which, according to his son, became enlarged into "dresser, friend, flapper, guide, stop-watch, auditor, treasurer." Charles was the youngest of three children, and though we soon lose sight of John Lamb, the eldest of the family, Mary Lamb is inseparably connected with her younger brother, and is one of the most fortunate of unfortunate characters, of whom we ever have read. When only seven years old, Charles was presented to the school of Christ's Hospital, where, among other companions, who afterwards grew celebrated, he became known to Coleridge, for their school intercourse seems hardly to have been friendship. Nervous, sensitive, delicate, retiring, he was ill-formed to rough it through a public school, had he not combined with these qualities, which often invite bullyism, a kindness and want of resentment, which even disarmed boy-tyranny, generally the most heartless and beast-like of all tyranny. Here Lamb showed a decided leaning towards classical learning. He read with a will, and easily mastered the uneasiness of learning, as old Lily calls it. Had he been so minded, or had nature been generous enough, he might have secured an exhibition, and have entered the church. But whether Lamb would ever have relished that profession is doubtful. He had, however, a stammering speech, he could only raise difficult vocables by a strong effort, so that a profession, in which he would have been obliged to do three parts of his duty in public, was out of the question. After a sojourn of seven years in Christ's Hospital, Lamb quitted it. His brother had obtained a situation in the South Sea House—that old co-partner-

ship of bubble renown, which still wore its uniform of clerks, and kept up the show of mercantile importance. The desk seemed best adapted to the capabilities of Charles, and under his brother, in the old South Sea House, he wore away three years subsequent to his leaving Christ's Hospital. This may be considered his mercantile apprenticeship. Here he learnt the difference between the account book and the Tutor's Assistant, between entries of realities and entries of the schoolmasters' invention. And no novel is more averse from the racking action of real life, than the simulated knowledge of the ciphering book from the real knowledge of the ledger. At the end of three years, in 1792, when the French revolution was in full swing, and Robespierre was triumphant, Charles obtained an appointment in the India House, which henceforth became his permanent and only employment, except that literary labor, which has left us a rich, if not an abundant treasure.

A clerkship in the India House, prolonged through thirty of the most vigorous years of life, would not seem to be a very likely means of enriching the mind and cultivating genius. The dry registration of chests of tea, and checking and counterchecking consignments of rice and indigo from the east to the west, are anything but poetical in their aspect. But it is surprising how closely the poetry and prose of life are connected. What a slight change will convert the most passionless transaction into a lawsuit, and what a little difference there is between the inspiration of a speculator, which leads him to try the humour of fortune on her most tender jealousies, and the

inspiration of a poet, which often aggravates the same fickle gender by the same kind of insubstantial trusts. Amid the dull routine of compound additions and subtractions, of red ink and black ink entries, Charles Lamb managed to store his mind with favorite scraps of knowledge, which raised longings and visions, such as ripen at last to works of passion, and reflection, and invention.

He had, as we have said, formed at Christ's Hospital a half friendship with Coleridge. This half friendship ripened, after he left school, into one of the most perfect and unvarying of mutual reliances. Now there was a vast difference between Coleridge and Lamb. The brain of Coleridge was a fiery furnace, into which everything that entered was changed and etherialized. The brain of Lamb was merely a forge, which heated and made malleable and more shapable, that which before had shape and tenacity. Lamb never strove to resolve into vapour and elements the hard realities that surrounded him, or to gather up the floating fumes of speculation into solidity. Coleridge was constantly at this task. He was striving to pass into the fixed and consolidated streams of electrical light, or to dissolve the body he trod on into intangible gas. He never seemed to have his foot upon the solid earth. He was always making the present the mere spoke of a ladder to reach some visionary future. Lamb had accepted the world as he found it. He, from the first, had never entertained any mean opinion of mankind, and was content to confide in them. Coleridge, from the first, had formed a false or rather an undue estimate of man.

He conceived that the power of improving the compound of vice, folly, crime, high-mindedness, cunning, frankness, deceit, baseness, ambition, and the other endless catalogue of distinctions, which are constantly varying him, like rags in a Kaleidiscope, was a task not only to be attempted, but was very likely to meet with some success. While, therefore, Lamb, in his closer alliance with the world, demanded less of it, and obtained more from it, Coleridge, in his dreamy speculations, could never find ease in things as they are, but was constantly turning from dream to dream, and securing nothing. His beginning was as his end; but this is not an uncommon event with such speculators. The nothing they secure is to them more valuable than the ignoble fruit of efforts in closer connection with the earth. Heaven is their throne, the earth but their footstool. Coleridge was one of the purest and noblest of the race. When he had reached a consolatory idea it was more to him than meat and drink. The world as it went was to him a workshop filled with raw material which needed only the skill of the perfect artist to convert it into brilliant texture and noble embellishment. He only asked to be permitted to dream, and to relate his dreams. A hearer who would hearken with reverence, and humour his wordiness, was to him the perfection of a companion. Whenever the vapour accumulated, a consenting listener was necessary to give it vent. Such a listener was Lamb.

In the meantime the old schoolfellows only met occasionally. Coleridge had proceeded from Christ's Hospital to Cambridge, but spent his vacations in London,

and these were now the seasons when the friends came together, and expatiated on the fitness of things. Coleridge, still all alive with his ideal world, which the chaff and contact of such matter of fact beings as university students had never succeeded in weakening, found Lamb always ready to listen and yield to his speculative visions. There was at that time, in the neighbourhood of Smithfield, a little public called the Salutation and Cat. This humble ale-house was to Coleridge and Lamb what the Cheshire cheese and Rainbow had been to Goldy and Johnson. Here Coleridge talked, and Lamb listened. As often happens, the two intellects found in the wideness of the distance between their inclinations and expectations the most unbounded pleasure in each other. Had Lamb been as fierce a dreamer as Coleridge, sympathy would have clashed, and opposition would probably have taken place of mutual admiration. They often supped together during their prolonged meetings, and egg-hot, Welsh rabbit, and Orinocoo are especially mentioned as the animal parts of these idealisms. When these appeared, Coleridge might refine, but Lamb was by no means inclined to put the regeneration of society in competition with substantialities. We fear he was never enough of a philosopher to consider the fumes of Orinocoo a less satisfactory influence than the fumes of metaphysics. But nothing material could at this time check the current of Coleridge. He seized on all the attenuations of thought and theory, with which philosophers of the mind had been chasing each other in circles for centuries, with the assurance that something substantial and real, after all,

was to be extracted from them. We may learn a little of the condition of Coleridge's mind at this period by noting its wanderings. He had started as an Anglican. But, in turning over the Athanasian mysteries in his mind, he found difficulties thicken around him. Those mysteries, which became afterwards to him the very evidencies of truth and divinity, were, at this immature stage of his convictions, inventions of mortal weakness. He had already flown from their confusion to Unitarianism, from free-will to necessity, and he rushed into this new domain, mad to extract proofs from figures, illustrations, reasons, and rambling excursions over the whole field of his young acquirements. Priestley had become his philosopher, Belsham his priest; and with notions bolder, fuller, and more comprehensive than the system he was backing, Coleridge held it up as the only ground on which a satisfactory footprint could be impressed. This brilliant vapour was delightful to Lamb. He sat and listened to the expositions of his companion with not a word of denial or approval. He was indifferent whether the logic was right or the premises sound, whether he apprehended a reality or a delusion, when he gave another pull at the egg-hot and refilled his pipe. While Coleridge was drawing some nice distinction that resolved apparent free agency into the necessary, he only felt the presence of a mind that could grapple with great subjects; and he was proud to get a glimpse, in an easy familiar way, into that vast limbo of human mistakes, to which he never had the wish to add, on his own part, a single word of error. But "fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute," were not

the only subjects which entertained these young celebrities. Poetry and Logic, the invisible and the visible, the hot and the cold, were bound up together in the brain of Coleridge in such a manner that their contradictions never contradicted. They always maintained their integrity. Coleridge could use the wildest forms of imagination to coop and subdue the links of reason with a stronger chain. His soarings seemed often to make the outline of his vast notions clearer. He mapped his world as often from a balloon as from the sequence of angles and sines. When he was on the earth, his aspirations were above it; when he was above it, he was constantly looking below. This uncommon mingling of the exact with the notional, dimension with infinity, gave much, if not all that was peculiar to the philosophy of Coleridge. It extended his power over the two great territories of thought, and enabled him to collect riches from each. He has shown, by his example, that metaphysics and poetry united may be better than metaphysics alone for securing definition in obscurity, and collecting pure honey on the wing, rather than by extracting an adulterated compound of it from crushed fibre.

Lamb could appreciate the poetry of Coleridge better than the metaphysics. When necessity and free-will began to make Lamb nod, he was easily recalled to sensibility by a challenge to stand by some poetical innovation. The sentimental drawl school was an abomination to both. The simple taste of Lamb led him to go so close to nature as almost to become common place. The enthusiastic disposition of Coleridge led him to adorn and embellish,

so that of all the writers who sprung up almost spontaneously at this time, and who recognised a severe study of nature, as their fundamental principle, Coleridge deals with the most adventurous ideas. And here, in the little parlour of the Salutation and the Cat, over the savory fumes of beef-steak, and Welsh rabbit, and egg-hot, discussion, and criticism, and theory gave birth to thoughts which ripened into the Ancient Mariner, and Gineveve, and Elia. Lamb afterwards confesses, when his friend was parted from him, and the cold vehicle of correspondence was substituted for the warm pleasure of face to face intercourse, that, while they "sat together through the winter night beguiling the cares of life with poesy," Coleridge "first kindled in him, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness." But these tempting enjoyments could not last. That great world which they were both eager to do homage to, one by studying it, the other by serving it, drew Coleridge from London, and Lamb was left to the common staple of clerks, with whom he was commercially connected. This was a severe change, and he felt it severely. He endeavoured to lighten it by writing; and his earliest preserved correspondence are the letters written to Coleridge at this period. Lamb was then twenty-one years old, and Coleridge a married man of twenty-four. Out of these letters we are able to extract morsels of the mind and feelings of Lamb at this early age. Sometimes they are despondent—a very common turn in young men, whose abilities are better than the generality of those who are naturally their companions. They find insipidity where they need

sympathy, and turn reproachfully against the world because they do not find the intellects around them as good as their own. It is the average, and perhaps the low intellect, that riots, in its narrow limits, and enjoys the world. And this is proper enough. Such constitute nine-tenths of the whole fabric of society. Now the world is maintained by its greater, not by its smaller groups. It therefore is diligent and incessant in looking after those who support it. It collects amusement from all quarters for them. It studies their humours, flatters their weakness, supplies them with food for every change of appetite and whim of inconsistency. Hence the average and low intellects have always enjoyment at hand. The higher intellect has, in a great measure, to shift for itself, or pay largely for any attention to its wants. It often finds itself lonely and abandoned, and had not nature given it a great store of internal resources, it would oftener be as Lamb found himself when Coleridge was removed from him. "You are," Lamb writes to him "the only correspondent, and I might add the only friend I have in the world. I go nowhere, and have no acquaintance. Slow of speech and reserved of manners, no one seeks or cares for my society, and I am left alone." "In your absence," he says in another letter, "I feel a stupor that makes me indifferent to the hopes and fears of this life." The matter of the letters of Coleridge, which do not appear to have been preserved, can only be hazily traced in Lamb's replies. From these we perceive that the Poet-Philosopher launches, as usual, abroad into the vast ocean of opinion and speculation, and

gives sail to every wind that blows. Sometimes Lamb is puzzled with this mysticism, as in one of his letters, where Coleridge said, "It is by the press that God hath given finite spirits, both evil and good, a portion as it were of his omnipotence." Here the divine and human mind seem to Lamb to unite, and he asks if such be not blasphemy. In another passage, written as a consolation under a terrible calamity, Coleridge says, "You are a temporary sharer in human misery that you may be an eternal partaker of the divine nature." This seems to Lamb almost impiety. He recoils from it. He weighs up the pride, vain-glory and hypocrisy of the animal, and can perceive nothing in such a compound worthy to hang even on the skirts of divinity. We cite these only to throw a little light on the two minds, so singularly apart in their ideas, and yet so singularly together in their sympathies. But when Lamb remonstrates with Coleridge, he does it mistrustingly. He so reverences the abundance of that mind from which he had been accustomed to draw knowledge, that he seems to totter when his opinion clashes with that of his friend. Lamb is always a disciple to Coleridge. In metaphysical topics there was never the least kind of disapproval. But when these metaphysics threw some of their daring notions on theology, Lamb admitted them with fear and hesitation. He confesses weakness, and stammers out a little independence.

But no themes were so congenial to Lamb as literary themes, and he had already imbibed that thorough taste for the old drama and for quaint prose, which ruled him throughout life. Dainty passages in Beaumont and

Fletcher, or Isaac Walton, or Massinger, are frequent subjects for his pen. He loves to pick out their shy charms, and to recommend them to his correspondents. Modern literature, and even modern poetry, enjoyed little of the consideration of his quaint taste. We are inclined to believe that this characteristic of Lamb was really the feeling of all those who were destined to be the reformers and teachers of their time. The vapid, cold-blooded, mean-spirited literature of the day drove every really bold mind back on older writers, who told nobler tales in simpler language. But the literary love of a young man soon begets imitation. Coleridge was busy in compacting his excursive ideas into verse; and Lamb, with such inclinings to rich old composition, in an age when poetry was the most popular form of literature, could hardly avoid adventuring as a poet of another kind.

One of the singularities of this spring-tide of an era of poetry was the partnerships which the young aspirants formed, during the first flight of their broodlings. Wordsworth and Coleridge sent out the Lyrical Ballads in conjunction. Southey and Lovell had preceded this example by four years, in a volume which is almost forgotten. Lamb, Coleridge, and Lloyd were associated together in a third compound volume. There seems to have been no particular reason for these associations, except the hearty friendships which were common to the writers, and their anxiety to get into print in the most economical way. Yet poetry was then a far more profitable article than it is now. Every newspaper had a corner appropriated to the poet, and every magazine and periodical, not devoted

to special subjects, would as soon have dropped its editor as its poets. Lamb assigns to Coleridge the honor of giving his mind the poetical twist. But the direction of his nature tended that way. Accident could only expose its secret towardliness. For though he afterwards gave up the mere structure of verse, he, nevertheless, continued in his prose to pour out sufficient of the matter of poetry to build up a great reputation. It is only the logical definition of poetry which separates Elia from the Epistles of Horace or Pope.

This volume was some time undergoing the process of shaping and completing. It was at length published by Cottle of Bristol. It contains only twenty eight pages by Lamb, and is merely remarkable as the only production of his mind which he thought worth publishing up to this date, 1797. Lloyd, the associate in this volume with Coleridge, was the son of a Birmingham banker. He had been taken prisoner by the magical talk of Coleridge at Cambridge, where they were both students, had devoted himself to literature, and now, for the first time, like Lamb, appeared before the world.

But nearly a year before the publication of this volume an event had happened, which cast its shadow over the whole of Lamb's life, or rather prescribed its course. Insanity had manifested itself in Lamb's family, and Lamb himself had, in 1795, suffered from an attack of it. It seems to have lasted only a few weeks, and it is not well known whether there was any external cause to which it could be referred; but fortunately it never returned after this attack. Lamb, in his first known

letter to Coleridge, thus alludes to himself at this period. "My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year (1795,) and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse at Horton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite anyone. But mad I was! And many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume if all were told. . . Coleridge, it may convince you of my regards for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness as much almost as on another person, who, I am inclined to think, was the more immediate cause of my temporary insanity. . . At some future time I will amuse you with an account as full as my memory will permit of the strange turn my fancy took. I look back upon it at times with a gloomy kind of envy; for, while it lasted, I had many, many hours of pure happiness. Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad! All now seems to me vapid, comparatively so." This malady, which Lamb sports with so gaily, assumed in his sister a complexion of the most tragic horror. The attack on the brother seems to have been an accident, and not a part of his constitution, or perhaps the germ was manageably weak. But madness in Miss Lamb was almost her nature, and sanity her abnormal state. The family in 1796 was in a condition of trouble from the age and helplessness of the father and mother, but by no means such as to account for the violent frenzy which suddenly broke out in Miss Lamb. The father was nearly in dotage, the mother bed-rid. The income of Charles added to the

pension of the father was sufficient for tidy circumstances, and Miss Lamb added a little by millinery. She had thus her business to attend to, had apprentices to look after, and the care of the aged parents devolved in a great measure on her. It is supposed that these anxieties, added one to another, brought to a crisis that malady which had shown its existence previously, and now seemed to be settling into inert melancholy. But this indication suddenly changed. "It appeared," says a newspaper report of the time, "that while the family were preparing for dinner, the young lady seized a case-knife lying on the table, and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her apprentice, round the room. On the calls of her infirm mother to forbear, she renounced her first object, and with loud shrieks approached her parent. The child by her cries quickly brought up the landlord of the house, but too late. The dreadful scene presented to him the mother lifeless, pierced to the heart on a chair, her daughter yet wildly standing over her with the fatal knife, and the old man her father weeping by her side, himself bleeding at the forehead from the effects of a severe blow he received from one of the forks she had been madly hurling about the room."

This event, the most dreadful that can be imagined, consigned to Lamb the care of his sister for life. Henceforth he appears as the guardian of her existence, while she, in her intervals of health, became to him the most invaluable comrade and housekeeper. The madness that thus in a moment broke up the household and happiness of Lamb was a constantly recurring malady in his sister, during

a life prolonged to more than seventy years. But it had now done all the mischief it was destined to do. Both sister and brother henceforth watched and anticipated the coming on of the affliction, and whenever the warning was given, sister and brother walked together to the asylum, which the former knew but too well was the only means for preventing other tragedies. Charles, we are told, carried the strait waistcoat, which was kept for these sad occasions; and during the interval of the imprisonment of Mary Lamb, which was commonly about six weeks at a time, the brother passed his days in a state even sadder than those of his sister. Every return to her home was as a renewal of his existence, a holiday, and festival.

This sad event hindered for a time all the literary plans, and deranged all the literary visions, which, under the spell of Coleridge, were springing up in his correspondent. "God," he writes just after the event, "has preserved me my senses; I eat, and drink, and sleep, and I have my judgment, I believe, very sound. . . With me the former things have passed away, and I have something more to do than to feel. . . Mention nothing of poetry; I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind." Yet just before he had been busy and sanguine in contributing to the poetical volume, and this resolution was but the desperation bred by the calamity struggling to heal itself. In a month or two the old inclination returned, and exertion resumed its old course. So soon do the most terrible changes of life blend with movements they cannot alter. Miss Lamb recovered, was removed from the asylum to which she had been consigned, and

her brother faced these terrible circumstances of his early life boldly, because he had that good fortune to rely on, which had set utter poverty at defiance. We can bear many misfortunes, which we rate greater than poverty, with far more steadiness than we can bear even the dread of poverty. "God be praised, Coleridge," he writes in a subsequent letter, "wonderful as it is to tell, I have never once been otherwise than collected and calm; even in the dreadful day, and in the midst of the terrible scene, I preserved a tranquillity, which bystanders may have construed into indifference—a tranquillity not of despair. Is it folly or sin in me to say that it was a religious principle that most supported me? . . I felt I had something else to do than to regret. . . I had the whole weight of the family thrown on me." Thus, even at the crisis of the misfortune, there was the bearableness, which springs from a sense of a duty;—a promise in occupation to remove the greater weight of the calamity, and that feeling, fostered and followed out, accomplished what it promised.

We are almost entirely indebted to the letters of Coleridge for what knowledge we possess of these early details of Lamb's life. Coleridge was the first of his literary correspondents, and for some time the sole one. Coleridge, as we have seen, awakened in Lamb the ambition of authorship, or directed it, if he did not altogether originate it. Out of the friendship of Coleridge grew the connection with Lloyd, and afterwards with Southey and Wordsworth. And out of Lamb's connection with Lloyd grew his connection with Manning. So that

the Christ's Hospital school-boy intimacy of Lamb and Coleridge determined the most hearty and lasting friendships of Lamb's life, and gave direction to its literary power, and was the cause of that store of mirth, and wisdom, and confession, which belong to his letters. To these intimates by far the greater portion of Lamb's letters are addressed. Indeed, the only other person who at all occupied an important place in his correspondence was Bernard Barton, to whom Lamb did not become known till 1822.

The early letters to Coleridge are, for the most part, occupied with criticism and suggestions on Poems that have now somewhat of the aspect of productions that have had their day. Coleridge was then working at his Sybilline Leaves, Wordsworth on his Lyrical Ballads, Southey at his Epics. These productions in invention, novelty, vigor, and fire, are far beyond anything that has been produced since 1830. Yet their popularity has, in a great measure, ceased. They are still published, still read; but they are rather looked on as the feeble lispings of an age of infancy, and the admirers of the late artificial and tame school hardly appreciate the enthusiasm that could stake reputations on the Ancient Mariner, Thalaba, and the Idiot Boy. But posterity after all must make its own selections. A sirloin will mostly be preferred to a hash, and whatever may be the ultimate opinion on the early poets of the nineteenth century, facts which give us a little glimpse into the manufactory, whence so many and such memorable productions were thrown forth, will always have their interest. There cannot be a doubt that posterity

will appropriate something from each of the great poets of the period, but it is doubtful whether there will be even a line selected by that vigilant critic from the volume which Cottle published at Bristol. Lamb and Coleridge would have left no more name than Lloyd behind them, had they not worked richer veins of genius than this first volume manifested. It is curious now to read of the care and caution which these young authors exhibit during the period of incubation. How they tone lines now forgotten, write, re-write, and polish what will not bear the contact of half a generation. And then we almost come to the unwilling conclusion that all this labor was only exerted to bring about forgetfulness, or a meagre notice in the compilations of the literature of the age. And then we are beset by this hesitation:—Are our canons of judgment pure? Are we free from the taint of supercilious taste, and the false idolatry of a second-rate age? Do not the works which we exalt bear the same relation to Wordsworth and Byron as the monkish hymns bore to Horace and Catullus? We pause for a reply.

The year after this volume was published, Coleridge left England for Germany, so that Lamb lost the "guide, philosopher, and friend" of his literary childhood. He had, however, been beforetime introduced to Southey, and had spent a fortnight at Burton, in Hampshire, as the guest of the poet. He had thus secured a correspondent, not equal in value to Coleridge, but one who afterwards became his true steady friend. Southey had already a reputation. He had published his Lyric Poems, Joan of Arc, and Thalaba, and was preparing his Eclogues for the

press. Some of these he sent to Lamb, and Lamb criticised, and sometimes objected to details; but on the whole showed himself a warm admirer of his new friend. Indeed, confidence between the two was soon established, and Southey became second only to Coleridge. It is interesting to trace the difference which appears in the letters of Lamb to these two friends. To Coleridge, Lamb imparted everything. He was seldom or ever sportful, but often serious. He broke up his heart to him. He had no misgivings that he could be too free, or too confident, or too earnest. He wrote with more reverence than he would have done to a father, with more love than he would have done to a mother. He believed in him. He looked on his reputation as part of his property. He asked his advice when he was in difficulties; and he followed his counsels, when he gave it. There is thus a serious tone in his Coleridge correspondence, resulting from the depth of feeling, whence he dug his confessions. But there is not this intensity in the correspondence with Southey. It becomes perhaps more interesting on that account. It shows another side of the intellect of the man. We write of trifles, and common places, and the ups and downs of feelings to sisters and parents. But to our more removed correspondents, we endeavour to make a more intellectual display. Heart and affections are cast aside. We become competitors for opinion. We strike for admirations, and even for jealousies. We like to show how we can handle trifles, and make them as interesting as catastrophes. We like to play with common place in a manner so graceful that it becomes novelty, and attracts

the interest of invention. It seems that something of this kind of ambition moved Lamb in his correspondence with Southey. He no longer imparted his religious feelings, his hearth cares, his sorrows, his hopes, his disappointments, as he did to Coleridge. But, on the contrary, he began to show more clearly what his mind could do—how it could hover over its subject, and play with it; that there was dalliance in it; that, notwithstanding its hard schooling, it was still full of sport and merriment; that it could turn everything it touched topsy-turvy, and yet set it on its feet again. Still this liveliness had its growth. Its lightness and ease were fourteen years in reaching their perfection. It was not till 1810 that sportiveness and humour gave their tickling charm to everything Lamb wrote, and touched all his correspondence with the most refined and charming comedy,—chaste beyond other chastity, gay beyond other gaiety.

But we must now turn to another scene. Up to this time, Lamb has been a mere private person, an India house clerk, addicted to quiet and peculiar reading, with an itch for composition, which had found relief in about thirty pages of verses in a small duodecimo. There was nothing obtrusive in the man, but much that was really retiring; there was nothing startling to propriety in the poetry, but something almost commonplace. Since, however, it made its appearance in the same volume with poetry of Coleridge, and Coleridge had already talked himself into a party, and that party was feared and hated as party had never been feared or hated before, Lamb had put in a sort of underhand claim to the fate of a

partisan. This party was Jacobin, and it was taunted with cherishing ideas, of which Robiespierre, Collot D'Herbois, and Carrier had been the representatives.

During times of quiet, in the lull between great storms, when the minds of men are at ease, with respect to political regularity, and they apply their energies to social improvement, commerce, and the sciences, it is hardly possible to realise the state of feeling and opinion which prevails during convulsions. And yet these easy times, fascinating in the closet, have really been times of short duration in general. If we could form a debt and credit account of convulsion and quiet, it would be found that convulsion had a far larger estate in the political commonwealth than quiet. Almost every generation has its own disturbance, its own fever and madness, mostly derived from political fever and madness. History is full of these repetitions, never identical in detail, yet pretty regular in their general outline. But this law seemed, at the latter end of the last century, to be about to break up. The French Revolution opened with a fury, and proceeded onwards with a succession of horrors, that were wholly unlike every former convulsion. Its violence seemed likely to tear society up by the roots, and the period of rest, which had succeeded former disturbances, seemed likely, in this case, to be the end of society altogether No one understood it, no one trusted it. Its partisans of to-day were its foes to-morrow, and they who had put the first match to the fuel were the first to clamour for water to extinguish it. After the lapse of nearly three quarters of a century, we are able to look upon its machinery with

a more correct vision, but it is still obscured with unaccountable crimes and inconsistencies. There was, however, this distinction, which separated it by a vast distance from other historical revolutions, with which it seemed, on a hasty glance, to be closely connected. It was the first example of a combination of the lowest classes to overthrow a government. There had been revolutions in Spain, in Russia, in Sweden, in Italy, and in England. But the monarchs, or nobles, or the middle classes, or the soldiers had been the directors of the political movements in all these former cases. The revolutions in England had hardly even recognised the mob in their course. That of John had been the work of the Barons and the Church. That of Charles the First had been the work of the Parliament. The masses never appeared in it but as secondary powers. That of James the Second had been, in like manner, effected by Whigs in combination with the Church and Nonconformists. The people were even less discovered in its working than in that of Charles the First. They never assumed even so much as a secondary power in it. But the French revolution was effected by the fury of the populace alone. This was its supreme head and director. Parliamentary debate and financial expedients were merely desperate attempts to allay the furies in the streets. The real active forces in the work were monster processions; mob menaces; demagogues ranting on the rights of man, and the abominations of governments derived from feudal slavery; visionaries demanding the destruction of images, and monuments of the past; threatening songs howled from the lips of

roughs and desperadoes; deputations from workmen, who seldom worked; and the abuse of women, who then showed, on a wide theatre, what a crime that fascinating angel can be translated into. Vice and Enthusiasm were the sole agents that had any authority, and all the vicious rallied round the idea of plunder; all the enthusiastic round the idea of reconstruction, on principles that excluded vice from its contingencies. The demands of such persons were on a par with their knowledge and their heartlessness. The relations of society were to them oppressions, the duties of society were slaveries, law and subordination were devices to enrich one party at the expense of many. The young sided with the most irrational, as is natural to them. They saw, in the overthrow of a government, that did not deserve to stand, by the help of powers, that had not the intelligence to understand the extent of their unfitness, a means of realising the dreams of an impossible philosophy. Out of the debris of King, Notables, Tiers Etat, States General, Edicts, they believed it possible to construct a government, in which the highest and lowest ranks would be drawn much closer together than they had ever been; in which brotherhood might take the place of constraint, and mutual reliance supercede much of the necessity of police and military control. It is some excuse that young men were allured by this sparkling prospect, when even elderly men, who had shown traces of philosophic exactness, were drawn into the delusion. A revolution, that thus fed the hopes and wishes of the ignorant and the base, and did not deter philosophy and experience,—which, at the same time, welded the masses

into one great union, and leavened the mass with attractive philosophy, overspread Europe, and weakened its strongest governments for a time. All the old restraints had given way, and masters and servants were, for a period, hardly distinguishable. No example in history, no theory in Philosophy, no idea derived from social experience, no security provided by religion, no bond of race and nature was equal to solve the great problem which was presented in France of a people that had burst their boundaries, and were plundering, with wild orgies, the rights and wealth of centuries. Despair and zeal, eagerness to clutch and eagerness to save, the recklessness of the base, the fright and palsy of the weak, the insolence and boldness of the poor, the obstinacy of the rich; masters mistrusting their servants, servants betraying their masters, the child denouncing the parent, the parent abandoning the child, affection turned into selfishness, religion into an operatic scene,—were all mixed up in one compound, that appeared to many as a stage in the reconstruction of society, to others as the rubbish of a great temple, crushed by an earthquake. Such a state presented no firm ground for any opinion. What was solid to-day, was quagmire to-morrow. The reliance of one hour was the betrayal of the next. Things might end as they begun, or they might return to order and sobriety, such as they had never before known, or they might break up a great nation into a number of insignificant cantons. Every one was left free to choose, either the good or the evil, from such an impounded mixture of both. Those who had sanguine hopes and warm imaginations generally looked for the

replumage of the eagle. Those who had much to lose, had seen much of the world, and had grown hard with a regular sobriety of life and action, looked on the French revolution as the triumph of the evil principle, as the commencement of the reign of Satan.

These two parties were strong in England. The sympathy of one was the antipathy of the other. Fox, already hoary in Parliamentary experience; and Mackintosh, then only known as a struggling barrister, were eager defenders of the first party. Burke, old like Fox in Parliamentary experience; and Canning, then hardly better than an Eton scholar, were heart and soul with the second. These great names attracted followers, and divided the land as it were between them. The young, the radical, and those who had little or no property to defend, were mostly with Fox and Mackintosh. The old, the nobles, the land-owners, and the Tories were with Burke. The lowest class in England sympathised with the lowest class in France, and applauded every example of successful assault on royalty, aristocracy, clergy, and venerable institutions. Almost all the other classes, trembling for themselves, sided with rank and order.

Southey and Coleridge, who had been linked by friendship and mutual tastes before Coleridge and Lamb became intimate, had among their youthful schemings, devised a plan to regenerate society. The old was over old, the good not good enough; so, like Wordsworth's Rob Roy, they set about making a world of better stuff. The old freebooter did this in the simple way of emptying whatever purses he could get hold of.

The new scheme consisted in never having a purse to empty. It was to be established in the wilds of America, and was to flourish on peace, good-will, and mutual support. The scheme was named Pantisocracy. But while it was in preparation, the temptation of Satan, who is always plotting against noble ideas, assumed the shape of a milliner of Bristol. Southey and Coleridge were smitten by two sisters. They married, and Pantisocracy seemed destined to be forgotten, and the long debated problem of human perfection was again laid aside for the sake of two dressmakers. Their new moral world was the dream of young ability, that pushes obstacles out of its way, and perches itself with a leap on the top of the highest elevation. Its mountains have no chasms, or avalanches, or glaciers, or precipices. It is delightful folly for the time, and though it seems always destined to end like alchemists' experiments, yet it is a treasure won, while it remains on trial. The marriages, as we have said, were the natural endings of these happy visions. But though one young dream had perished, it left the mind prepared for another. The French revolution seemed a bolder, grander, speedier way of achieving something of the coveted Pantisocracy than even their own back-woods' republic. Three parts of the greatest nation in Europe had at once come to their aid. They looked on themselves almost as voices crying in the wilderness.—"The day of salvation is at hand." Southey and Coleridge became at once identified with the party of Fox and Machintosh.

But the crudeness and heat of the anticipations on

one side were balanced by the hatred and rancour on the other. Those who thought themselves in danger saw in every one, who advocated even modified French principles, a deadly foe. The battle between the English Tory and the English Radical bordered on that of knives and daggers. Everything but the actual weapon was used. Whatever words could damage, whatever aspersions could brand, whatever filthy notions insinuation could awaken, were employed to point out the partisans of France, and heap them with scorn and disgrace. But not only were the actual partisans disgraced, it was also a disgrace to know them, to exchange a letter with them, or to hold any friendly relation with them. The man who spoke a word for the mob, that pulled down the Bastile, drew an atmosphere of odium around him. He was tabooed, he was a pariah, he could not touch any clean thing, and leave it clean. Coleridge was associated with Southey; and Coleridge, Lamb, and Lloyd were also associated. The wickedness then of Coleridge and Southey must also belong to Lamb and Lloyd. It mattered not whether they had ever written a word in favor of Jacobin or Girondin, or had sympathised with Marat or Charlotte Corday. They had published poems in conjunction with Coleridge, and therefore they must be Jacobins. They could only print poems with a republican, because they were republicans. So reasoned the anti-republicans.

It happened that the government, which Pitt conducted so long, was at first a wholly illiterate government. It had not one first-rate writer to support it. And whatever ability it ever possessed, during its five and

twenty years of authority, was all, like its own head, ability that had been originally on the opposition side. Its weakness, at this period, was felt severely by Pitt. He was anxious to stem the torrent of philosophic democracy by argument, or ridicule, or even misrepresentation, if it were but clever. He did not wish to depend on warrants, and magistrates, and constables alone, but on a force more popular and harmless. But all ability seemed to be born Whig. Toryism could not get a single tolerable writer. It had to drivel, and bark, and threaten in the weakest commonplaces. Its pen was worn to the stump, and no one arose to re-point it. At length Eton came to the rescue. In that aristocratic forcing-frame, the Tory has generally been stronger than the Whig element. At that time it had fortunately recently sent forth two or three young spirits, who had just the sort of ability that was needed to blend ridicule with rancour, to make laughter do the work of rage, and to deal blows at an enemy, by connecting him with what he hated, and overpowering him with compliments, that would be a disgrace to him if they were true. Few writers have ever possessed this talent so remarkably as George Canning. He, together with John Hookham Frere, George Ellis, and a few others of less importance, projected the Anti-Jacobin. Pitt encouraged the undertaking, and even contributed to it; and Gifford, already known as one of the most cutting satirists, was selected as Editor. The prose part of the work had little of the fineness of wit and humour, which has acted as embalmment to the poetry. It was generally coarse, personal, and malicious; and, indeed, there was a

sufficient infusion of these ingredients in the poetry. But the poetry was clever, as well as coarse; and witty, as well as malicious. It has been a question to determine who were the actual authors of the most remarkable pieces; as they were written, it is said, in a peculiar manner, to avoid detection. One writer originated and begun a piece, and left it in a common apartment, hired for the purpose, and open to the confederate Anti-Jacobins. Any of these falling in would read, and add a line or verse, or suggest some sharp idea. Thus many of the poems are attributed to several writers; but Canning, Frere, and Ellis have to bear the burden of the greater number. Indeed, the very best pieces, which are distinguished for the greatest quantity of that quality which does not perish with the occasion of it, have been universally assigned to Canning. The Needy Knife Grinder, the Loves of the Triangles, and the New Morality are of this class. No sooner, however, was the work started than the young poets, especially the Pantisocracians and their friends, were shot at. Pantisocracy and Infidelity; Liberalism and the destruction of all private rights; the desire to elevate the lower classes, and the plunder of the rich, were such convertible terms and ideas that they were at once confounded. Moreover, the young poets, Coleridge and Southey, had begun their career on a studied theory. The prevalence of glitter, sentiment, prudery, and made-up emotion, had so disgusted them, that they fell back on all that seemed opposite to these false qualities. Hence they threw away what was called poetic diction, and endeavoured to transfer the unpolished speech of

beggars, laborers, and artisans to the service of Epic and Lyric verse. A temper, at all inclined to ridcule, had a banquet ready spread for it, when such lines as these had been written by one of its foes :—

> "Cold was the night wind ; drifting fast the snow fell ;
> Wide were the downs, and shelterless and naked ;
> When a poor wanderer struggled on her journey,
> Weary and way sore."

Canning eagerly seized the opportunity thus afforded him. He began upon the Pantisocracians in the first number. Gilray, the Caricaturist, was employed, and his first sketch represented Southey and Coleridge with asses' ears, and Lamb and Lloyd as Toad and Frog. An inscription on the cell-door of Mother Brownrig, a Milliner, who was hung for whipping her apprentices to death, written by Canning, was a parody on Southey's inscription on Marten the Regicide. The second number contained the famous Knife Grinder, a parody on the poem of Southey, from which we have quoted.

Among the charlatans and mountebanks, who found place for their absurdities in the capacious principles of the French revolution, was Larevéllière-Lepaux. A deformed mind was in this case united with a deformed body. He was hunchbacked and crooked, but these defects did not lessen his self-estimation, or warn him, that he was unequal to the task of rooting up Christianity, and establishing a few of his own bandy-legged ideas in its place. The new sect, of which he was head or front, was called Theophilanthropist, and its object of adoration was a new Bible, or Great Book, as it was called, in which all

the virtuons actions of society were to be registered. Out of this volume their followers were to be continually reminded of their duties; and, should any times of violence and disturbance arise, under such a pure system, they were bidden to come forward, and exhort the raging roughs and determined villains to peacefulness, and to read them a chapter out of the Great Book. When oppressed or proscribed, they were to retire to a burying ground, to wrap themselves up in their great coats, and to wait the approach of death. The Theophilanthropists procured, by means of Lepaux, a decree that they should have the use of certain churches, alternately with the Catholics. They thus obtained nearly twenty churches. The Romish paraphernalia were covered up during the Theophilanthropist ceremonial, and reconsecrated afterwards. They had four festivals; one to Socrates, one to St. Vincent de St. Paul, one to Rousseau, and the fourth to Washington. Their creed had two articles—the Existence of God, and the Immortality of the Soul. Children were nominated by the letters C. T. being traced on the forehead *(Citoyen Theophilantrope.)* Marriages were celebrated by coupling the Bride and Bridegroom with ribbons and garlands. One of the colleagues of Lepaux proposed to him, as an infallible means of securing the triumph of his sect, that he should be hanged, and rise again from the dead on the third day. The fanatic did not think this a very safe test, and so declined it. This remarkable system, and it is one specimen of many kinds, which then prevailed, did not prevent Lepaux from becoming popular, and even attaining one of the chief places in the government. He

was chosen one of the five Directors in 1795, and had the departments of Education, the Sciences, Arts, and Manufactures assigned him. Here then was an object that seemed made to be laughed at. Canning could not spare anything so ridiculous. He has thus worked him, with two of his brother Directors, into the Loves of the Triangles.

"Thus happy France in thy regenerate land,
Where taste and rapine saunter, hand in hand;
Where, nursed in seats of innocence and bliss,
Reform greets terror with fraternal kiss;
Where mild philosophy first taught to scan
The *wrongs* of providence and *rights* of man;
Where memory broods o'er freedom's earlier scene
The lantern bright and brighter guillotine,—
Three gentle swains evolve their longing arms,
And woo the young republic's virgin charms,
And though proud *Barras* with the fair succeed,
Though not in vain the attorney *Rewbell* plead,
Oft doth th' impartial nymph their love forego
To clasp thy crooked shoulders, blest *Lepaux*."

But it was in the New Morality that Lamb and his friends were ridiculously united with the humpbacked Theophilanthropist, whom Canning represents as sending his Augustin, to convert the English to the Great Book, in the shape of Buonaparte.

"Ere long perhaps to this astonished isle,
Fresh from the shores of subjugated Nile,
Shall Buonaparte's victor fleet protect
The genuine Theo-philanthropic sect,
The sect of Marat, Mirabeau, Voltaire,
Led by their Pontiff, good La Reveillere;
Rejoiced our clubs shall greet him, and install
The holy Hunchback in thy dome, St. Paul;
While countless votaries, thronging in his train,
Wave their red caps, and hymn this jocund strain.
* * * * * *

Thelwell and ye that lecture as ye go,
And for your pains get pelted, praise Lepaux.
* * * * * *
And ye five other wandering bards that move
In sweet accord of harmony and love,
Coleridge, Southey, Lloyd and Lamb and Co.,
Tune all your mystic harps, and praise Lepaux."

Talfourd says that Lamb had never even heard of the existence of Lepaux. In the Anarchists, published two months after, the four, still in society, are again assailed.

"See faithful to their mighty dam,
Coleridge, Southey, Lloyd, and Lamb,
In splayfoot madrigals of Love,
Soft mourning like the widowed dove,
Pour side by side their sympathetic notes;
Of equal rights, and civic feasts,
And tyrant kings, and knavish priests,
Swift through the land the tuneful mischief floats.
And now to softer strains they struck the lyre,
They sung the beetle or the mole,
The dying kid or ass's foal,
By cruel man permitted to expire."

These aspersions were angry and bad enough, and they were accompanied by worse. But this worse was in prose, and came apparently from inferior hands, who, if they were not permitted to call names and invent slander, might as well have been nobodies. Their youth only made them more vain and violent. Nothing was too sacred for these insolent puppies of literature to bark at and defile. Coleridge was accused of preaching Deism, of being dishonored for it at Cambridge, of leaving his wife destitute, and his children fatherless; and this malignant abuse was used as a fulcrum to displace Lamb; "*ex his disce* his friends, Lamb and Southey." Both

Southey and Coleridge, who were the only parties who ever gave the least cause for any charge of holding opinions favorable to France, afterwards made apology for their conduct, by changing both their religion and their politics. They were welcomed into the Tory ranks, and to the Church, and became new examples of the doubtfulness of principles, which stretch very far away from the habits of society. In this case, as in many others, those, who had felt the construction of society defective and unbearable, were the first to become reconciled to it; while Lamb, who had never entertained out of the way notions on government and men, but was content to accept things as he found them, never altered his position, or branded at one period what he had embraced at another. But it is of no use to complain of the injustice of political writers, and to draw up an indictment against a lot of dead dogs. They had their worry and their bark while they lived. They were, we may suppose, very happy to be able to make their snarls felt by men, who had grown famous on merits, which they had no claim to. Well-taught school-boys are very apt to fancy themselves geniuses; and if their teaching should happen to come from Eton or Rugby, it is a thorough fact with them, that no good thing can come from any other source. Their self-sufficiency often makes their pertness something like cleverness; and they sometimes, as in the case of the Anti-Jacobins, make a hit; and fight, left and right, with spirit enough to inflict many wounds, though they may not compass many deaths. Throw dirt enough, some of it will stick, is the motto of such writers. The single genius of

Canning carried the Anti-Jacobin into a celebrity, that has survived its time; for though Gifford was the director of the whole, he appears to have limited his help to direction, or to some of those smart bitter morsels of injustice, which now and then add heat and spice to the prose. Gifford hated what he struck. Canning could strike, and still respect the stricken. Lamb perhaps rather enjoyed than shrunk under the attacks of these young Jackals. He went on jollily, and seemingly indifferent to every attack; and proved, by the friendships which he contracted with some of the most odious, because some of the most clever radicals, that he wished to kindle rather than extinguish the lurid light that was cast upon him. However, Pitt himself saw at last that if this young pack of untrained hounds was permitted to yelp after all kinds of game, he would be losing on one hand more than he gained on the other. His own party began to fear for their own weaknesses; and, at the end of eight months, Pitt suddenly put a stop to the work. It had succeeded, and done his party good. He was wise enough to end a dangerous coadjutor, while it was still dangerous to his enemies. Actaeon's dogs devoured their master. Pitt perhaps felt that he might fill the position of Rewbell or Lepaux in another six months.

This short political interlude is the sole political incident in Lamb's life. Indeed, it is surprising, when we consider the fierceness of some of his intimate friends on questions of goverment and law, that Lamb should have been all coldness in the midst of such fire. But he used politics only for sly humour; and joked at measures

that made Hunt, Hazlitt, and Godwin boil with indignation. We must return to Lamb's literary history. This literary history, though it ultimately sheered off so independently from that of his friends, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey, was in its growth intimately connected with theirs, and requires the same kind of tracing, to discover its meaning, as we apply to their productions.

No genius is independent of its ancestors. However closely it may be disguised, former writings have always their influence on the later, and the greater their influence, the greater in general their value. It is impossible for any genius to be wholly independent. Yet this was the delusion, the error of the friends of Lamb. They believed they were capable of renewing literature without incorporating into it any traces that would suggest predecessors. They effected this, with respect to the poetical literature that prevailed when they were born, and which continued to live in a consumptive state till the English Bards was published. They may be said to have fed this literature, though did not feed upon it, for it was the heartier, stronger, and wealthier poetry which the new race were producing, which left Charlotte Smith, Hannah More, Miss Blamire, Anne Barbauld, Anne Seward, Amelia Opie, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Tighe, Hayley, and Darwin, with a daily decreasing band of admirers.

Poetry, but for the new race, had thus fallen chiefly into the hands of old maids, and expressed the dementities of thwarted nature. It was the mere rinsings of the

casks of former poets. Hence Wordsworth sought to avoid models, and aspired to recommence an art, which had been debased to such worthlessness. He wished to throw away all the incumbrances and supplements of society, and to rely on a study of man, in that condition which has preserved the most numerous and liveliest traces of his original state. He went to nature with the same determination. The cottage, the forest, the heath, the tarn—shepherds, pedlars, ploughmen, waggoners, were the staple from which he preferred to manufacture verse. But where Wordsworth is most original, he is most tiresome. It is where we are reminded of Spenser, Milton, and even Pope and Dryden, that Wordsworth becomes most truly simple and poetical. To have been as original as he aspired to be, he must never have read imaginative works at all. We are pretty sure that under such conditions he would never have been read. Such poets as Burns, Clare, and Bloomfield have, from their position, been in closest connection with nature. Yet they studied models before they began to write. Ferguson and Alan Ramsay were to Burns; and Thomson was to Clare and Bloomfield what Milton and Spenser were to Wordsworth. Southey followed the same models as Wordsworth; and, while he remained at home, preferred the same kind of characters, to whom he imparted sentiment, by linking them with social wrongs. And when he left home, he arrived at the same uncontrolled originality, not only by adopting the extravagant traditions of Hindostan and Arabia; but by expressing his ideas in kinds of metre unknown before. Coleridge studied our older ballad

literature, and enriched the study with excursions to the gorgeous solemnities of Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Brown. Lamb sought his nourishment in the old dramatists, in Isaac Walton, Wither, Quarles, and even the old Duchess of Newcastle. Thus all these beginners of a new era attempted to ignore the era they succeeded altogether, and the last weak, polluted, nerveless drivel of the school of Dryden and Pope had virtually been destroyed when Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge commenced their career. That famous school of the Anne era, which enshrines some of the grandest of human productions, expired in the withered arms of old maids and matrons. Nay, we believe that whenever literature or art is consigned to the keeping of the weaker sex, it has passed the hour of its greatness, and is destined to be soon coddled to death. We are not certain that this is not the case with the present state of our fiction, which owes so large a share of its bulk to female writers, and has in their hands already become a vehicle for double faced morality, for the details of bigamy, for the nauseous incidents that slope the way to divorces, and for preposterous intrigue, heightened by hysterical passions and frenzies. It is a humilating fact, that the nasty and the vile should be the favorite subjects of such a class of writers.

Readers of by-gone literature, and we fear that they are lamentally few when compared with the bulk of readers, will remember a work by Mackenzie named Julia de Roubigné. Mackenzie was a celebrity when Walter Scott was still at work as a writer to the Signet in Edinburgh. He belonged to two eras; for while he was

a contemporary of Hume and Robertson, he was also a contemporary of Burns and Jeffrey. His Julia de Roubigné was a remarkable production. With more taste, and less movement in it than its contemporary fictions, it left a permanent impression by the delicacy rather than the depth of its matter. He is perhaps better known through his Man of Feeling. This work has nothing with which it can be associated. It belongs to no class of writing. It was the native overflowing of a well-disciplined and highly gifted mind, and took a shape that was both original and forcible. No reader can forget the madhouse scene—a scene which, like Sterne's Le Fevre and the death scene in the Fisher's hut in the Antiquary, has no equal. These works have lost appreciation now, in consequence of the rude and coarse demands of the new bands of uneducated readers, who have rushed pell-mell into the libraries of this generation. The purer taste of Mackenzie's Julia over the general fictions of his day attracted Lamb, and his second work, published the same year as the poems, was Rosamond Gray, a tale evidently akin to that of Mackenzie. But whoever reads Rosamond Gray may see at once how possible it is for mere tact to outstrip genius. Lamb, with all his mental force, had little of that ingenuity, which is required to make that force felt. He could use the mind as the skilful workman uses a log of mahogany. He could convert it into beautiful and tasteful articles; but he had not the mere shopkeeper skill of putting his productions in such positions as would show them off at the best advantage. He wrote in the most simple and artless style, he drew the purest character,

he adopted all that we approve and aim at, as far as is convenient, in real life; in short, all that we consider right and good. This is what few writers are able to do. This is the genuine test of ability. This is turning the log into elegant and useful articles. But these articles require proper situations to display them. It will not do to hide a rich cabinet in a dark corner; or huddle chairs and tables together in confusion. Writers, who are unable to tell things simply, and draw character naturally, can often put what characters they can draw in situations that will show them off to better advantages than they deserve. But Lamb put his characters in whatever position they fell. He dropped them from his pen, and left them to find their own places. They seem, therefore, more like unsorted goods in a warehouse than articles arranged to show their merits, and attract approbation. Now this art of dressing, as it is called, is an art which an apprentice might accomplish; but the management which is required to produce the article is another matter. Here the faculties of mastership and experience are both often unequal to it. Lamb could do the work of the master, but he failed in that of the apprentice. He could collect together intellectual fabric of a fine quality, and in sufficient abundance; but he could not *dress* it afterwards, he could not put it in the most showy places, he could not link incident to incident in such a manner that they should fill the reader with suspense, and twist and baffle him with various surmises. Any third-rate hack of a third-rate theatre can do this. The writer of a dirty farce for a penny gaff would be supreme in such a

faculty. But to Lamb it was a drudgery, an impossibility.

The incidents of Rosamond Gray seem silly to readers who have revelled in the smart dialogue and surprises of the modern novel. Rosamond and her grandmother are the only remains of their family. Misfortunes have deprived Rosamond of her parents, and with the scantiest means, she and her grandmother are, at the opening of the tale, living in a humble cottage. Rosamond is thirteen years old, and very beautiful and good. She attracts the notice of Allen Clare, a lad of fifteen, who is as amiable as Rosamond, and has also lost his parents. He lives with his only sister, ten years his elder. He is or will be wealthy. This sister had formerly been subjected to the attentions of a villain named Matravis. Allen and Rosamond are deeply in love; the sister perceives it, she proposes to visit Rosamond; they are mutually delighted with each other, they ramble in the evening, and everything promises a happy chapter of human history. But here the woeful defect of Lamb in contriving incidents comes out in all its absurdity. The walk of Rosamond and Miss Clare had so delighted the former, that when she had retired to her room, the warm, clear moonlight night provoked her to retrace their walk. In its loneliest part, she meets the former lover of Miss Clare in a state of drunkenness—there is crime—Rosamond dies under the horror of it, and Allen Clare becomes a philanthropist, and even succours the death-bed of his arch-enemy Matravis.

It will be readily perceived that there is very unncessary horror here; that the villainy of such a character as Matravis needs more occasion and preparation;—that the heroine, in

throwing herself in the way of her fate, commits an unpardonable folly, because a thoroughly unlikely one. Young ladies, however pleased they may be with rambles in a bright summer evening among glens and wood-walks, do not choose to seek them alone at midnight. The beauty of the heroine, and the tenderness of the materials are spoiled by such violations of probability; which are the more to be wondered at, as Lamb evidently felt, and appreciated with great force, the gradual unfolding of the swathes of destiny in those grand tragedies he so delighted to pause over. However, Rosamond Gray sold better than his poems, and it is still admired, and perhaps oftener read than Julia de Roubignè or the Man of Feeling, which are far finer works.

Lamb's next effort was the Drama. He was two years older when he ventured on this experiment, and it might have been anticipated that two years' studious reading of the old dramatists, by one who so entered into their quaint humors, would have improved him in that part of his labor, which appears as such a defect in Rosamond. In 1799, he had formed the plan, and begun the tragedy of John Woodvil. But the same faults that injure the tale are no less apparent in the tragedy. Lamb's ideas seemed to catch shades of color from old writers, beside which the writing of authors who had studied moderns only, seemed raw and heavy. And his mind was certainly happily formed for detecting and appropriating these evanescent beauties; but it took no hold on robuster excellencies. The whole body of his writing is tinged with happinesses of expression, thus caught and laid up for use.

But grosser excellencies slipped by. He either did not see them, or did not care for them. Though a play-goer, Lamb never seems to have been a play-goer of the ordinary sort. It was not the action upon action that made the gallery gape, that he looked after, but the delicate dialogue, the neat appropriateness of thought to feeling, the evolution of graces, kindred to situation and sentiment. What he delighted in, that he attended to almost exclusively. He was never one to study the humors of his readers before his own. Hence the individuality of his writings, the sincerity and ease which they show; but, hence also his successive failures at first to gain the attention of the public. The public is a great bully, and a great coward. When it gets hold of a mean spirited author of much ambition, and little ability, it knows he dare not disobey, except at the peril of his expectations. With this tool of its humors it has neither reason nor mercy. It makes him paddle in all manner of dirt, and flunky it to the top of its bent. But when real life and soul come before it, and it attempts to work the same changes on them, as it does on the trembling, it finds a different result. Ability then becomes the donor, and it is content to wait for reputation. The bully yields, after a short interval of sulkiness, and becomes an enthusiast.

In John Woodvil we have the free unsophisticated dialogue, the natural easy straightforward expression, just as we find them in Dekker or Beaumont. But change of situation, accumulation of surprise, the rise and fall of passion, the interweaving of interests and actions are all wanting. Yet these are of more repute on the stage than

all other elegancies and exactnesses in mere language The dialogue may be inflated, and rave on with outrageous extravagance, provided the stage requisites be attended to; while it may be as perfect as Antigone, and fail to draw a single approval, if the stage requisites be neglected. The plays of Beddoes, Talfourd, Coleridge, Lamb could not stand the stage. Yet they contain fine poetry, ripe language, and exquisite taste, which are all wanting in Black Eyed Susan, the Colleen Bawn, the Ticket of Leave Man, and Lady of Lyons, some of which plays count their popularities in runs of more than three hundred nights long. But these were put together by old stagers, men who, with little appreciation of the loftier powers and passions, could manage those rough behaviours, which the gallery appreciates; and could, at the proper moment, make one scene whet the appetite for the next. But it is a singular fact that none of the group of writers, to which Lamb belonged, succeeded in the Drama. Almost all attempted it, but none succeeded. Wordsworth, Southey, Scott, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge were all humbled, beside such writers as Knowles, Holcroft, Frederic Reynolds, Jephson, when they set foot on the boards. Yet in the hands of play wrights, who had only to apply the stage laws to the creation of the novelist, Guy Mannering, Rob Roy, Ivanhoe, and others of Scott's novels have been exceedingly popular. In fact it requires genius and mechanism to write a play like Venice Preserved, and though mechanism will do alone and be exceedingly popular, as in the case of the Colleen Bawn, yet genius alone is like a light without a lantern, the least puff of wind will extinguish it.

Lamb entertained good hopes for Sir John Woodvil, and wrote away with visions of profit and popularity before his eyes. He tells Southey, while he was engaged on it, that "it will be a medley of laughter and tears, prose and verse, and in some places rhyme, songs, wit, pathos, humour; and, if possible, sublimity." This ambitious programme was hardly half fulfilled. About Christmas, 1799, it was, however, finished and transmitted to John Kemble, in order, if possible to bring it upon the stage. After waiting eleven months without hearing either good or evil of his venture, Lamb wrote to the stately manager to inquire after its fate. An answer came back that the play was lost, and a request was added, that another copy might be supplied. As Lamb had meanwhile had the play printed, though not published, this request was easily complied with, supplying, however, not a printed copy, but one written out. Lamb had an interview with Kemble; but the deficiences of the Tragedy were just those which, in the manager's eyes, were most offensive, because they were those which his patrons were least likely to forgive. It was declined, and Lamb had now no resource left but to publish, which he did forthwith. The public gave it hardly a welcomer welcome than Kemble. The *Edinburgh Review*, then a mere kitten, exercising its sharp young claws on everything it could reach, had a short amusement with John Woodvil, which it attacked on the score of its antique dialogue. A brief analysis will be quite sufficient to show the main causes of failure.

Lamb chose the son of an old Puritan for his hero,

and the period immediately after the Restoration for the action of his piece. Sir Walter Woodvil, the father of John, has been so deeply engaged in Puritan and Parliamentary disloyalty as to be exempted from the act of indemnity. He puts on a disguise, pretends to be a Frenchman, and takes refuge in Sherwood forest, with his second son, and a small company of devoted friends. John meanwhile remains at the Woodvil seat. He has never sinned as his father has done; but has maintained sound cavalier principles from the beginning of the contest between Charles and his Parliament. He is now surrounded by a set of Cavalier friends and parasites, who feed on the estate, and carry on the merriment of the Restoration with drink and riot. In one of these orgies John reveals his father's hiding place to his false friend Lovell, who forthwith proceeds to apprehend the old man, in order to hand him over to the gallows. Sir Walter falls into an apoplectic fit and dies, when he finds that he has been betrayed by his son. These transactions occupy four out of the five acts of the tragedy. The fifth act is taken up with the repentance and remorse of John. This slim construction is carried on by a very terse dialogue, very much akin to what you would expect from Massinger or Ford. But the secret of the son is revealed to Lovell in a manner altogether childish, without cause or any previous inducement, or difficulty whatever; and the catastrophe follows immediately after with as little preparation or excitement. A good master of stage effects would have contrasted the consciencious old Puritan, Sir Walter, with his Cavalier son embarrassed with emotions of filial love,

on the one hand, and public duty on the other; and would not have betrayed the secret of Sir Walter's hiding place during a drunken revel, but rather have allowed the over anxiety and design of the son to save the father been the means of his capture. It did not want two such rascals as Lovell and John Woodvil to betray one poor old Roundhead. We can hardly understand how it was that such an admirer of the writings of men, who excelled in plot, contrivance, surprise, subtle preparation, and thoughtful unwinding of events, should have missed all these stage commandments, and depended on an accessory, not a necessity—on pure language, and natural sentiment.

After this ill success, Lamb paused. Literature was his choice, not his necessity. His daily bread was provided. He could do without the plaudits of Theatres, or the welcome of booksellers. When he wrote, he wrote from that state of mind which makes writing a relief—which discharges, as it were, a debt of the brain, and makes its functions haler and sounder for the effort. But while this condition of the intellect was in the course of forming, he had no cause to whip it into action. He left it to grow uneasy by accumulation; and, when he felt a strain on the nerves of thought, which a little composition would relieve, he sat down to compose. This is the real and only method for producing high class writing; but it is a method which young authors have no patience to adopt, and old ones generally cannot afford to do so. We lose sight of Lamb as a literary man for six years, from 1800, to 1806, a pretty considerable interval, during which his

works were piles of India House Ledgers and Day Books. Lamb's first efforts, as we have seen, were Poetry, stimulated by the conversation and example of Coleridge. His next was Rosamond Gray, which owed its origin to an enthusiasm for the works of Mackenzie. His third was inspired by his reading of our old Dramatists, and his sensitive delight in their delicate poetical truths. But these three works were on the whole disappointing. No stormy applause greeted them. The public hung aloof. It had not been consulted, and it had no wish to be pleased. When La Traviata was received coldly, on its first representation at Milan, Verdi, meeting a friend next morning, said, "So they say my Opera will not do," and then he added with a self-confidence in himself, and a tone of mistrust in his critics, "We shall see." He knew the public, and the course of its humour. In less than a year it was on all the stages of the great Theatres of Europe, and is still one of the most golden of stock operas. Lamb's reception never became like Verdi's; because he did not apply himself so dutifully to popular tastes; and the slow progress of appreciation is even yet moving. But as each of his former efforts had owed its direction to the natural attraction of his tastes, so his fourth attempt was in like manner produced by his habits, more than by any design of obeying public inclination.

Charles Lamb had always been a playgoer. It was his delight in his school-days to get opportunities and permissions to see some artificial comedy or riotous farce. The change of time and taste has sadly altered the character of this amusement. Lamb has again and again

recorded his impressions of it, his love for it, the readiness with which he lost himself in the wiles of the performance, how thoroughly the passions of the boards carried him on with them, with what abandonment he entered into their mockery, how the actors were almost as real to him as they are to a child, how he rioted over the "starch spruce opinionated" Spanish loftiness of Bensley in Malvolio, when he seemed "to tread on air, to taste manna, to walk with his head in clouds, to mate Hyperion," till that hour of mistake was worth an age with the eyes open. How he enjoyed Dodd in Aguecheck —such an Aguecheck as never could be beaten; when you saw the "first dawn of an idea stealing slowly over his countenance, climbing up little by little with a painful process," when a "glimmering of understanding would appear in a corner of his eye, and for lack of fuel go out again, when a part of his forehead would catch a little intelligence, and be a long time in communicating it to the remainder." How he analysed Dickey Suett, who held the countenances of the town in subjection by two syllables, which he "drolled upon richer than the cuckoo." How he gloried in the multiplied countenance of Munden, who had no face that you could properly "pin down and call his." He has commemorated these and other stage heroes with a gusto that shows how important they were to his pleasures—what hours of excellent fooling they had imparted to the flatness and staleness of existence, what a pure help they had been to lift the mind out of its convention, and give it a taste of free air.

Now Lamb, though a student, was a dainty one.

He did not swallow all the offal that was put before him, and grow as overgrown with reading, as a Smithfield prize with fat. He tasted rather than devoured, and always left feeding with an appetite. But the most instructive reading of his life was apart from books. He let knowledge come to him, and welcomed it heartily; but he never pressed it into his society, never intrigued for it, never put on airs to coax it, or assumed anything but that natural indifference, which sometimes invites more than the most importunate solicitations. Hence he relied on the benches of the pit for more instruction than the pages of Philosophy or Morals. While he was glowing at the wonderful multiplications of Munden in Cockletop, he was storing up better knowledge to him and for the world than he could have done under the writings of those, whom the world calls learned, because it knows very little about them. The foot-lights, the orchestra, the hanging strata of human expectation above, the glowing inclination to be pleased, that adds its rosiness to the whole scene, was an especial page of human life, that he again and again pored over. When Lamb took up the pen afresh, after six years' rest, it was to communicate some of the knowledge that these pleasant perusals had taught him. It might have been expected, from the nature of his mind, its delicate humour, its fine sense of the ridiculous, and the critical power he possessed of detecting the under currents that run below the productions of our best comic writers—of Congreve, Vanburgh, and others—that he would have chosen this department of the Drama for the vent of his ideas. But he decided

otherwise. Perhaps he had a more teeming enjoyment in farce than in genteel comedy. It turned life out of doors with a wilder freedom. It seldom reminded him of carks and cares, which comedy, in the fulfilment of its duty, is obliged to do. Farce is something not only beyond toil and trouble, but beyond experience. It allows everything that will twist propriety into good humour, and good humour is after all little other than forgetfulness —little other than a temporary oblivion, not only of every care and sorrow that has happened to us, but of every one that menaces us. It is a kind of half death, in which that part of us only is dead, which makes us querulous, impatient, and apprehensive. But comedy is not so oblivious. It still remembers the miseries of life, and often renews them. Its world is made up of the outer world that it likes not, as well as the world it shapes by its own ingenuity, and which we may assume it approves. Lamb rejoiced sometimes, perhaps oftentimes, in forgetting reality altogether; and resigning himself to something different from all experience, or at least that only permitted the droll and laughable parts of experience to appear. Moreover, Munden, Liston, Farley,—spirits of the boards, that took the life out of him, and resolved it into one shaking system of laughter,—were all farce performers. It may have been some considerations such as these, or it may have been a combination of them, which we call accidents, that induced him to try his hand at Farce. And it was on his own principles that he resolved to write it. He could never be servile. He could never, as we before said, be a mere parasite of the public. He formed

his opinion of the proper, and wrote after his own opinion. He endeavoured to make his Farce the trifle he considered it ought to be—an airy nothing, fretting with importance, and exhausting itself in sound and fury.

He called it Mr. H., and it turns on the trouble and mortification, which an opulent young spark encounters, through having a disagreeable name. He comes forward as an unmarried gentleman, with servants and all kinds of attractions, save his name. This name is Hogsflesh, which he conceals under its initial letter. A multitude of surmises are formed before it is known, and as this mystery is believed to indicate high rank, all sorts of dignities are conferred on him. The ladies court him, rivals hate him; and, when in the midst of a brilliant assembly, he blurts out his real name, all fall away from him, as if he had been suddenly turned into a real grunter. The upshot is that Hogsflesh gets changed by the succession of an estate into Bacon, and the disgusted become again sudden competitors for the hands and the fortune of the late Mr. H.

The matter of this is flimsy enough, but so Lamb intended it to be. The thin veil, covering as little as possible, was his idea of perfection in a farce. Talfourd says, "this verbal banter and watery collision of the pale reflexions of words could not succeed on a stage which had begun to require interest, moral or immoral, to be interwoven with the web of all its actions, which no longer rejoiced in the riot of animal spirits and careless gaiety; which no longer permitted wit to take the sting from evil, as well as the load from care; but infected even its prince of rakes, Charles Surface, with a cant of sentiment." This may be

part of the reason why Mr. H. was doomed, like Lamb's former effort, to condemnation. However, it attained what John Woodvil failed to attain—it was accepted by Drury Lane, and brought out in December 1806. Elliston, one of Lamb's chief favorites, undertook the principal character. The house was crammed. Lamb and his sister were in the pit. The first act went off pretty well, but the second act betrayed a lagging interest, and when the overcharging of the farce exploded in such a disappointing upshot as Hogsflesh, the audience denounced it with groans and hisses, in which Lamb himself joined. He afterwards confessed to Wordsworth that "John Bull must have solider fare than a letter." Though Lamb took his ill-success philosophically, and he had a clear idea how accidental the fate of the best pieces is at first, yet his hopeful and somewhat sanguine nature induced him to fill the chasm of uncertainty with a host of flattering sprites. His conversations, his correspondence about the time of its appearance, were all on Mr. H. How he should print his orders, whether Boxes on the presentation tickets should be printed in Roman or Old English, and what money he would get by the success. "Our conversations naturally fell upon pieces," he writes to Wordsworth, after an interview with Tobin—"different sorts of pieces—which is the best way of offering a piece, how far the caprice of managers is an obstacle in the way of a piece, how to judge of the merits of a piece, how long a piece may remain in the hands of the managers before it is acted." Here all the psychological adventures of a Farce are as

seriously debated, and were, for the time, as important to Lamb as the undertaking of a great war is to a statesman. After the trial, he wrote to Mrs. Hazlitt. "Mr. H. came out last night, and failed. I know you'll be sorry, but never mind. We are determined not to be cast down." To Wordsworth he writes, "After all, we had rather it should have succeeded. A hundred hisses (hang the word I write it like kisses—how different)—a hundred hisses outweigh a thousand claps. . . But *non cuivis contigit adire Corinthum.*" To Manning he writes, "I suppose you know my farce was damned. The noise still rings in my ears. Was you ever in the pillory?—being damned is something like that. . . . However, I have been free of the house ever since, and the house was pretty free with me on that occasion. Hang 'em how they hissed! it was not a hiss neither, but a sort of a frantic yell, like a congregation of mad geese, with roaring something like bears, mows and mops like apes, sometimes snakes, that hissed me into madness. 'Twas like St. Anthony's temptations. Mercy on us, that God should give his favorite children, men, mouths to speak with, to discourse rationally, to promise smoothly, to flatter agreeably, to encourage warmly, to counsel wisely, to sing with, to drink with, and to kiss with, and that they should turn them into mouths of adders, bears, wolves, hyenas, and whistle like tempests, and emit breath through them like distillations of aspic poison, to asperse and villify the innocent labours of their fellow creatures, who are desirous to please them. Heaven be pleased to make the teeth rot out of them all therefore. Make them

a reproach; and all that pass by them to loll out their tongues at them. Blind mouths, as Milton somewhere calls them."

This work of the year 1806 was succeeded by a longer interval of literary inaction than ever. From this date to 1820, a period of no less than fourteen years, which comprised Lamb's life between the age of 31 and 45, the very hey-day of existence, he produced no work of any importance. His sister published two volumes; one called Tales from Shakspere, the other Mrs. Leicester's School. To each of these Lamb contributed. Six of the Shakspere tales are by him, and three of those in the other volume. In 1810, he published his Specimens from the Old Dramatists. But these form no part of his reputation. The Specimens only evince the correct taste and judgment of the selector, and were useful in acquainting the public, that wished for such knowledge, what substance and force there were in the old neglected literature; and how feeble and slip-sloppy modern popular writing appeared beside some of this robust and natural language. What Percy is supposed to have effected by means of our old Ballad literature, Lamb wished to effect by means of our old Dramatic literature. He wished to cleanse style from its expansions, to collect it, and brace it. He had himself drawn hints, and gleaned thought of the very purest kind from those old pages. He wished that the young students of England, instead of learning the use of their fine language by means of Grammatical technicals, Lectures on the Study of Words, Collections of Synonyms, and Hints on Composition,

should rather pursue the language over its haunts, track it out, and grow acquainted with it in its native recesses. The lecture room is a poor substitute for the closet to those who really mean to work with the best tools—indeed the best tools can never be obtained there. Lamb offered these specimens as a sample of what the great stock contained, and the portable nature of the offering, as well as its sound quality, made it a very acceptable present. But it was not Lamb's mind that was seen in it. It was only Lamb's common place book.

The whole of the Specimens were chosen from Shakspere's contemporaries, so that they very effectively represent the genius of the first, and perhaps greatest of our literary eras. Attached to the Specimens, Lamb subjoined remarks and illustrations; and among these one which became a source of much annoyance to him. Ford was an especial favorite with Lamb. Indeed, the praise which he bestows on this, by no means first class dramatist, is, we think, over abundant. Ford is often harsh, without being terse; and abrupt, without being weighty. The single greatness which has been claimed for him is pathos; but even this is sometimes strained, till it loses the softness of its quality, and becomes muling. Lamb's super-appreciation led him into what we think extravagance in his praise of the last scenes of the Broken Heart. This tragedy is founded on a kind of Montague and Capulet family quarrel in Sparta, which the King of Sparta attempts to heal, after the Romeo and Juliet fashion, by persuading a marriage between the son and daughter of the two hostile houses. This marriage goes no farther

than betrothal, and the young gentleman is enraged to see his affianced bride carried off by a richer rival, through the intrigues of the brother of the young Juliet, who bears the family hatred to the Romeo. All this, to our mind, Shakspere, in his similar plot, has managed with such supreme superiority, that it is only for the sake of clearness, that we have used his names to signify Ford's characters. At this point, Shakspere and Ford part. The brother of the Juliet loves and marries Calantha, the King's daughter; and the Romeo, to revenge the injury this brother (Ithocles) has done him, murders him, and the Juliet goes mad, and starves herself to death. Now Ford has represented Calantha, the King's daughter, as the woe-begone of his piece—the Broken Heart; when really the Juliet is the one who suffers those disappointments and persecutions, which would be most appropriate to such suffering. And in the last scenes, which have been often extravagantly held up as instances of sublime pathos, Ford has represented Calantha dancing at a wedding between the friend of the Juliet's brother and the sister of the Romeo, and while dancing a messenger comes to inform her of the death of Juliet. She still continues dancing, and calls for a brisker measure. A second messenger informs her of the sudden death of her father, by which event she becomes queen. She takes no notice, but bids the merriment increase. A third message informs her that Ithocles her husband has been murdered by the Romeo. This, no more than the former events, moves her. She still continues the rejoicings, as if nothing had happened. But afterwards it appears that this was simulation. The

blows fell in their proper places, with proper effects. But she retained calmness till she had finished with the world, and then confesses :—

"Oh my lords,
I but deceived your eyes with antic gesture,
When one news straight, came huddling on another,
Of death, and death, and death ! still I danced forward ;
But it struck home, and here, and in an instant.
Be such mere woman, who, with shrieks and outcries,
Can vow a present end to all their sorrows,
Yet live to count new pleasures, and outlive them ;
They are the silent griefs which cut the heart strings,
Let me die smiling."

On this passage Lamb made the following remark :—"I do not know where to find in any play a catastrophe so grand, so solemn, and so surprising as in this. This is indeed, according to Milton, to describe high passions and high actions. The fortitude of the Spartan boy, who let a beast gnaw out his bowels till he died, without expressing a groan, is a faint bodily image of this dilaceration of the spirit and exenteration of the inmost mind, which Calantha, with a holy violence against her nature, keeps closely covered, till the last duties of a wife and a queen are fulfilled. Stories of martyrdom are but of chains and the stake ; a little bodily suffering. . . What a noble thing is the soul in its strength and in its weaknesses. Who would be less weak than Calantha? Who can be so strong? The expression of this transcendent scene almost bears us in imagination to Calvary and the Cross ; and we seem to perceive some analogy between the scenical sufferings, which we are here contemplating, and the real agonies of that final completion,

to which we dare no more than hint a reference." Weber, in editing Ford, quoted this note, and when the Edition came under the eye of Gifford, who reviewed Weber's book in the Quarterly, the savage critic elevated his poison-teeth, and bit with all his might. "He has polluted his pages," he goes on to say, "with the blasphemies of a poor maniac, who, it seems, once published some detached scenes of the Broken Heart. For this unfortunate creature, every feeling mind will find an apology in his calamitous situation." Now there has never been a more determined hater than William Gifford. But though essentially a literary man, the whole gist and essence of his hate sprung from political opinion. It was not bad books and bad writers that he hated; but Whigs and Radicals. These could do no right; and against these he continued to pour all the malice that had been suddenly dammed up by the discontinuance of the Antijacobin. Between the death of the Antijacobin and the commencement of the Quarterly—a period of eleven years—he buried himself among the old dramatists, and vented his ill-humour in contemptuous attacks on former editors of Jonson and Massinger. But on the establishment of the Quarterly, he resolved to continue what the Antijacobin had begun, and no critic ever came to the task with fangs more eager to devour. As the king can do no wrong, the Radical could do no right. Every poem or chimney corner tale, every pamphlet, every accidental opinion, every careless expression, that had a Liberal origin, was taken into custody by this self-constituted constable, and put in the stocks. Radicals were to him

what a red rag is to a bull, or the pert school-boy to the Domine, or a tawdry sharp-tongued cook to a self-important mistress. Words were only a weak vehicle to express his abhorrence. He considered Radical ideas and Atheism as one and the same thing. A notion hostile to Tory government was a covert design to seize Tory estates, and divide them among radical tailors and shoemakers. Mr. Shelburn or Mr. Perceval could not be criticised without a design on the Constitution. The remarks of the Quarterly, in other words of Gifford, on Hazlitt, Hunt, Keats, Shelley seem now as abominable libels as ever were penned, and as deserving of damages as anything that ever had to bear the scrutiny, and suffer the penalty of the law. Yet these articles passed as only deserved, when it was a libel even to speak the truth, and when one of these authors was subjected to two years' imprisonment for calling the patched, padded, wigged, and rouged Regent an "Adonis of fifty." But it was the reign of Toryism. It was Toryism triumphant. It was when Toryism held such repute and power as it never held before, and is never likely to hold again. It was Toryism in its natural state, when it had no fears to consult, before it expressed its opinions; no dread of reactionary masses, resisting its severities, and cutting off its power; no notion of the coming revolution, which was about to change its confidence, and outspoken recklessness into fear, caution, and reserve. It could bully, and punish, and slander its enemies to their ruin. It did so; and no one belonging to the party used these offensive weapons so eagerly as William Gifford. A narrow but exceedingly acute mind,

a wretched temper, a poor constitution, which a student's life had enfeebled, a chronic asthma, a youth of dependence, which had been befriended and brought up to independence by Tory patrons, had tended to bend his mind in one direction only. It knew no more of freedom than a hyena whelped in a menagerie. It snapped at everything that was not barred and fastened like itself. It took freedom for the unnatural condition, and rovers that approached its confinement as proper prey.

Moreover, Toryism was then, as it had been in Pitt's days, far in the minority with respect to ability. Three parts of the cleverness and genius of the age were radical. As name by name grew renowned, it was found to be on the side that wished to throw wide the doors of Parliament; to open offices to Catholics, and Dissenters; to allow bread to be purchased in the cheapest markets; to expose the system of close corporations; and to hold out a friendly hand to Ireland, by enacting better land laws, and hewing down its unchristian State Church. The Tories had obtained Southey and Coleridge by apostacy; and Wordsworth, Scott, Wilson, Lockhart, Theodore Hook, Croker, and Canning by choice. But these were but a feeble counterpoise against Bentham, Mill, Byron, Campbell, Moore, Hunt, Hazlitt, Keats, Shelley, Montgomery, Wolcott, Landor, Lamb, Hallam, Godwin, Dr. Parr, Sydney Smith, Robert Hall, John Foster, Sir James Mackintosh. When Gifford, writhing under his savage temper and his aching sides, looked at this array of enemies, and considered what a mere division was left him to grapple with an army, he might well bring to his aid

the sneaking advantage which was to be gained by calling base names and attributing scandalous motives. Open warfare must be attended by defeat. He had but a forlorn hope to work with. The honorable passions were altogether of no value in such a case. But the host of dishonorable and vicious attributes might do something still. Hence to bring charges of miscreant, atheist, leveller, tub-orator, vermin, "unbeliever, cut-throat, dog," blasphemer, was to add to the petty forces a reserve that might be sufficient to hold the literary liberals at bay. These atrocious nick-names might damn their books; and turn the prudish part of society, and that part of society which exists on a rigid imitation of the prudes, from associating with such dangerous characters. This was the tactics of a generation.

In those indefinite fictions, which are called honor and high-mindedness, it is considered impolitic, as well as somewhat base, to return a foul blow with a foul blow. Every one, but the actual combatants, thinks it the safest method of quieting an enemy, to return praise for calumny, the left cheek for the damaged right one. It is seldom, however, that the logic of this retort is appreciated within the ring. The rope, which separates the beholders from the pugilists, draws a strong line between their convictions. Gifford had accused Lamb of what society in general abhors. Lamb was not one that loved dispute, or cared much for retaliation in cases of harmless attack. But the malice of Gifford's blow was evident enough. Had it been in his power, the critic would have torn the India house clerk from place and livelihood. He had the will

to punish him for an indiscretion, as if he committed burglary, or even murder. Gifford, who was born in poverty, had first been ship-boy, and afterwards apprenticed to a shoemaker. To rise to such a position as that he then occupied, though by means of early assistance, was rare and admirable credit. It was an evidence of great ability, firmly directed to a meritorious end; a triumph over obstacles, that is of everlasting example and benefit to well-directed minds. But society is made up of contradictions. It approves and promotes what it is perfectly willing to laugh at as a joke, and indeed holds as a welcome and approved subject for ridicule. That Gifford was a shoemaker as well as a critic was really an addition to his merit; and society acknowledged it to be so. Nevertheless, society was quite on tip-toe to jeer the cobler, as well as to flatter the critic; and it cannot be much wondered at that Lamb avenged himself, as the slightest knowledge of mankind informed him he was quite at liberty to do.

Saint Crispin to Mr. Gifford.

"All unadvised, and in an evil hour,
Lured by aspiring thoughts, my son, you daft
The lowly labours of the "gentle craft"
For learned toils, which blood and spirits sour.
All things, dear pledge, are not in all men's power;
The wiser sort of shrub affects the ground;
And sweet content of mind is oftener found
In cobler's parlour than in critic's bower.
The sorest work is what doth cross the grain;
And better to this hour you had been plying
The obsequious awl, with well-waxed finger flying,
Than ceaseless thus to till a thankless vein:
Still teasing muses, which are still denying;
Making a stretching leather of your brain."

There was not much wit or wisdom in this; but it eased Lamb, and so did its duty.

But unfortunately we have not yet done with the Quarterly. Twelve years after this attack of Gifford, Lamb received a milder blow, of the same kind, but a far more painful one, from his friend Southey. Year after year, the growth of liberal opinions had been noticed in the Quarterly with pangs and spasms of regret. The advancing evil was always surrounded by scouts and spies, and article after article was written to raise alarm against it. But whatever power might be in these desperate fear-breeders, they hardly ever reached their mark. The drift of popular feeling towards radical action, which they were intended to arrest, was never delayed for an instant. The force and persecution they advocated were remedies that even their own party dare only now use covertly; and they only had the unsatisfactory effect of convincing bishops, rectors, and justices, whom nobody ever suspected of liberality. Nevertheless, the reviewers wrote on in desperation. Every radical meeting, or resolution, or movement, was held up to scorn for its absurdity, or to justice for its treason. There had been movements that had been put down by force. Troops had fired upon a mob, and charged with the bayonet, while it was listening to a John Bright of 1818. The indiscreet wife of the "Adonis of Sixty" had become the goddess of Radical faith; and the two parties had come to conflct on her trial for infidelity to a withered rake, and staked their supremacy upon its verdict. The Tory Premier—worried with the anxiety of his position, hounded here

and there by his own up-breaking party, disheartened with mistakes and unforseen issues, wretched with the sense of a capacity unequal to the demands upon it, writhing under the satire and sarcasm of a hundred hostile prints, and dreading the approaching day of reckoning—freed himself and his country by suicide. Yet all these signs of a coming crisis only inflamed the passions of those in power, only made them rail on their victims with less caution, and try to trample on them with a heavier foot. Leigh Hunt had been thus frequently treated, for he was an arch-offender. He had conducted one of the most influential weekly papers, and had been the victim of the Regent's petty revenge. Hazlitt, another of Lamb's boon friends, had been tortured with the same kind of misrepresentation as his friend Hunt; and Lamb had been linked with these victims, and denounced in the Quarterly outbursts of anger. These he had borne. But when Southey—when his choice friend—when he, into whose bosom he had poured his literary secrets, and on whom he had been accustomed to look as his next dearest consolation after Coleridge—when he turned against him, Lamb could hold back no longer.

Southey was a man of whom as much good or as much evil might be said as you pleased; and each character might be well supplied with instances. He had been an ultra liberal, he became an ultra tory. He had been a downright Socinian, he became a downright Churchman. He had held Jacobin notions, and made a hero of Wat Tyler; he came at last to hold notions almost of Stuart malignity, to defend divine right and passive

obedience, and to advocate the use of force against those who did, as he had once done. On every change of opinion, nothing was more apparent than his dogmatism. Up to the age of twenty-five, society was a great conspiracy of the rich against the poor. After that age, society became a great conspiracy of the poor to rob the rich. Up to the age of twenty, the Athanasian creed and the Arminian doctrine were truths of universal obligation. From twenty to twenty-five, Socinus took place of Athanasius, and Priestley of Arminius. After twenty-five he returned with re-doubled zeal to the Church he had scorned and rejected. He chose and delighted to write on those subjects which had cut such antics in his own mind; and he never wrote on them with one grain of toleration, or one misgiving on the durability of his last opinion. If he fell in with a liberal, the poor devil had no mercy to expect from Southey. He must be debarred from speaking, writing, or publishing. The law of libel and the law of treason must be construed to their basest letter, to put him down. If he fell in with a Catholic, there seemed nothing in human disabilities equal to counterbalance his disloyalty. He must be excluded from all offices of trust or emolument. He must be harrassed even for permission to think. He must be proscribed, and never permitted to join with an Anglican in any good work. The demand for emancipation was as reasonable as that a horse should ask to be relieved from the bit. The request to be released from damning the head of one's own religion was the stubborn wickedness of men, who had hostile intentions on the country. If he fell in with a Unitarian, it was

as bad. The mob that sacked Priestley's house in 1791 were not a grain more intolerant than Southey, when he came across a follower of his old creed. The wickedness of Unitarian belief imparted its wickedness to all the actions—political or moral—of the believer. There was no persecution that could over-punish such offenders. No government could be secure while such were part of its construction. If he encountered what he called an infidel, it was worst of all. Here all the crimes of human nature centred. It was liberalism carried out to the end it would always ultimately reach. It was a present example of the future nation, should the ideas of radicals over-ride those of tories. The bond of the social system and the bond of belief were only distinctive conventions of the same thing. When the infidel appeared, he was only a forewarning of the havoc to come, a specimen, sent by heaven, to disgust its creatures with the advocates of Catholic Emancipation, Reform, and Free Trade. Yet never was any man more sensitive to hard words than Southey. He was once denounced in the House of Commons. William Smith of Norwich cited Wat Tyler, and called him an apostate. The mettle of Southey was instantly aroused. "I brand you slanderer upon the forehead," he said. "Salve the scar as you will, it is ineffacable. It will go with you to your grave, and will outlast your epitaph."

But with all this evil there was much in Southey to honor and imitate—much that men, who have written far less offensive things, might glory in, if they could be attributed to them. His days were spent

in such industry as is rarely found in any of the compulsory occupations of life. A weaver or a coal miner had far more leisure than Southey permitted himself. His literary tasks, apart from his poetry, were those which required the greatest labour—History, Biography, Criticism—and usually meet with the least reward. Notwithstanding his popularity; his income, on this account, was never equal to that of many other authors, who had little claim to anything beyond ability, and no claim to anything like his industry. But work was always his choice, and though, when we consider the sums that literature has realised since, he was poorly paid for it, he never turned real want from his door. No poor author applied to Southey for aid without receiving attention, often employment, and oftener still relief. The hard earned produce of his pen was freely bestowed. Many weak and ignorant people, who believed that they were poets because they could tack rhymes together, applied to Southey for his help to launch their compositions, and to solicit the world in their behalf. There could have been no unkindness in repelling all such solicitations, and consigning them over to the benevolent difficulties of their own exertions, to secure what reputation they deserved. Southey did not do so. In two instances, he came forward and pleaded for two rhymsters of this class. Mary Colling, described as a servant; and John Jones, as an old servant, were, by Southey's intercession, enabled to come before the world as respectable types of the class, prodigy; and were gainers by his assistance. When Kirke White published his volume of poems at the age of

seventeen, for the purpose of procuring the means of study, they were sneered at in the *Monthly Review.* and were nearly useless to their author. The volume fell into the hands of Southey, and while the boy was smarting under the rebuke of his critics, he wrote to him, and encouraged him in his resolution, which led to White going to Cambridge. When death overtook the youth, in midst of success, and while he was daily adding hope to hope, Southey undertook his life, and the editorship of his remains. He did this wholly from sympathy. He would never receive reward from it, though the work went through edition after edition, and was highly profitable to the relatives of White. On the tablet, which an American erected to White's memory, Southey is not forgotten.

> "Foremost to mourn was generous Southey seen,
> He told the tale, and showed what White had been."

When Coleridge and his wife parted, Southey took the wife in, and contributed to bring up the children of his friend. He did the same to the wife of Lovell, his other early friend. His conduct to the relatives of Chatterton was not less benevolent and exemplary than in the case of Kirke White. Herbert Croft, who afterwards became a clergyman of the Church of England, obtained by surreptitious means, from Chatterton's mother, all his letters and remains. These documents, which the deceiver had only borrowed for a few hours to read over, he kept several months, copied them, and published them, and rewarded the relatives of Chatterton with £10. This abominable transaction raised the indignation of Southey; and, in

conjunction with Joseph Cottle, they, without any remuneration, published an Edition of Chatterton's works, for the benefit of his sister, his only remaining relative, by which £300 accrued to her.

Even in those parts of his character which appear most blamable, there was a moderating principle at work. Though accident has made them look so insincere, his worst enemies have never accused him of insincerity; and had he been less overbearing in his language, nobody would have thought it wrong that the manhood of his judgment should differ from its infancy.

The article in the *Quarterly*, which separated Lamb and Southey for a few weeks, was entitled The Progress of Infidelity. The irritation which the Tory party felt at their daily losses, and the grim forebodings of a season of Whig and Radical retaliation, for all the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of a government, which had been in existence upwards of sixty years, was the primary cause of the article. There was no hope left but the feeble one of securing the unconfirmed by a miserable picture of what Infidelity had been wherever it had been tried; and gliding from this general view to that particular view, which associated the political party of progress with Deists and Atheists. When, therefore, Southey, after a clever review of the subject, and an especial history of one of the most absurd of the Infidel sects of the French Revolution, turned upon the English part of the subject, and stated that the word Liberal expressed "whatever is detestable in principle, and flagitious in conduct," and that the newspaper organs of these opinions aimed at the

"destruction of the principles on which public prosperity and private happiness are founded," and that some excited insurrection, some mingled filth with blasphemy—when after this gloomy introduction Southey brought the writings of his old friend forward as a "book which wants only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it is original," Lamb felt himself mixed up with the group of Infidels, on whom Southey had been pouring all the lava of his pen—Paine, Voltaire, Mirabeau, D'Alembert, Lepaux, Helvetius, Rousseau, Hume. Lamb would not have shrunk at the friendship of some of these—nay he would have considered it honor. But as Southey used them, they became whips to flagelate, and their alliance became disgrace. Lamb felt only the intention, and it was the intention he replied to. But perhaps after all, Lamb would never have noticed the attack had it not involved an attack on another of Lamb's friends. Southey cited one of Lamb's Essays, in which he had shown that fear in children is not excited by goblin tales, or foolish pictures; but is inherent in our nature. He had instanced the example of one of Leigh Hunt's children, who had been brought up "with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition, and was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or be told distressing stories," and yet the world of fear was as wide to this boy as to the most goblin-crammed of his age. "This poor child," said Southey, "instead of being trained up in the way he should go, had been bred in the ways of modern philosophy; . . . care had been taken that he should not pray to God, nor lie down at night in reliance upon his good providence."

In his reply Lamb asks what Southey refers to in describing Elia as a book needing a sounder religious feeling. "With no further explanation, what must your readers conjecture but that my little volume is some vehicle for heresy or infidelity. . . If in either of papers (Saying Grace and The New Year,) I have been betrayed into some levities,—not affronting the sanctuary, but glancing perhaps at some of the outskirts and extreme edges, the debateable land between holy and profane regions—(for the admixture of man's inventions, twisting themselves with the name of religion itself, has artfully made it difficult to touch even the alloy without, in some men's estimation, soiling the fine gold)—if I have sported between the purlieus of serious matter—it was, I dare say, a humour—be not startled, sir—which I have unwittingly derived from yourself. You have all your life been making a jest of the devil. Not of the scriptural meaning of that dark essence—personal or allegorical; for the nature is nowhere plainly delivered. I acquit you of intentional irreverence. But indeed you have been wonderfully free with, and been mighty pleasant upon the popular idea and attributes of him. . . You have flattered him in prose: you have chanted him in goodly odes. You have been his jester; volunteer Laureat, and self-elected Court Poet to Beelzebub. . . You have never ridiculed, I believe, what you thought to be religion, but you are always girding at what some pious but perhaps mistaken folks think to be so." "It is an error," he proceeds to say in a farther paragraph, "more particularly incident to persons of the correctest principles and habits

to seclude themselves from the rest of mankind, as from another species, and form knots and clubs. The best people herding thus exclusively are in danger of contracting a narrowness. . . If all the good people were to ship themselves off to Terra Incognita, what, in humanity's name, is to become of the refuse? . . Instead of mixing with the Infidel and the Freethinker—in the room of opening a negotiation to try at least to find out at which gate the error entered—they huddle close together in a weak fear of infection." Lamb then takes exception to some of the arguments of Southey, and shows their fallacy. He finishes a rather long letter with a defence of the characters of Hunt and Hazlitt; and, by means of a complaint on the discourtesy and impolicy of the Church, shows that it is itself creating dissenters and disbelievers; by exhibiting, on every occasion, a keener solicitude after fees and revenues than the consolation of the poor and ignorant.

But even this moderate remonstrance, as it may be called, rather than angry retaliation, pained Lamb acutely after he had published it. Southey, so apt to be inflamed at slight oppositions, knew his old friend too well to be exasperated. "On my part," he says, "there was not even a momentary feeling of anger. I was very much surprised and grieved; because I knew how much he would condemn himself, and yet no resentful letter was ever written less offensively. His gentle nature may be seen in it throughout." A month afterwards Southey was in London, and wrote to Lamb to ask permission to call. It was all Lamb wanted to restore himself to himself again. "The

kindness of your note," he replies, "has melted away the mist which was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. That accursed *Q. R.* had vexed me by a gratuitous speaking of its own knowledge, that the Confessions of a Drunkard was a genuine description of the state of the writer. Little things that are not ill meant may produce much ill. That might have injured me alive and dead. I am in a public office, and my life is insured. . . I wish both magazine and review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since." Would that all quarrels had so much reason in their beginning, and so much wisdom in their end.

In order to get rid of Lamb's small amount of dispute and anger at once, and to clear the evil passions away, we have rather anticipated matters of importance, in leaping from 1811 to 1823. In the meantime Elia had been begun, and the first series published; and it was when thus before the world that it had become matter for Southey's hard remark. But it is necessary to speak somewhat more in detail of this masterpiece.

Lamb was thus plodding over the best years of his life without any very active stir in any particular direction. At first he had thought that poetry was the direction towards which his abilities pointed, and we have seen how he tried himself. But he soon became sensible, that when he matched his verses against those of his immediate friends, he was last;—that the bold dashing

rush of language, which poetry often demands, did not seem allied to a nature that seldom rose to any heat, but kept an equable temperature, even in the midst of the violent passions that often glowed up around it. Some authors on trial will not take hints. However boldly the world tells them that their wares are not wanted, they still persevere; and often, like unscrupulous tradesmen, get customers through sheer impudence, and succeed in making readers of those indifferent idlers, who at first were determined in believing they did not want to read. Much indeed of the reputation of the present age is of this kind. The republic of letters, as it is called, requires as many and as particular introductions as a new aspirant for aristocratic connections fresh from the counter requires, before he is admitted into exclusive society. A highly artificial guard of literary apprentices, journeymen, clerks, and foremen surround its chief organs; and jealousy, in the inverse proportion to ability, keeps back any likely candidate for distinction as long as possible. It was not a part of Lamb's nature to work hard for renown, nor did he put much value on popular opinion. But he seemed to set a high value on a little money derived from the brain. Though it might be only as farthings compared with gold to what he received from Leadenhall, yet, in his mind, it would reverse itself, and be as gold compared with farthings in his secret estimation. Had he had half the solicitude and perseverance of inferior men, he might have reached a name through poetry. But the first check was enough. He declined to dispute the opinion of the world, and for twenty-three years he had written nothing new,

nothing that he thought fit for separate publication in poetry.

His next attempt, as we saw, was a short tale. But the judgment, which had so coldly received his poetry, did not warm up sufficiently over Rosamond Gray to induce him to believe in romance as the road he was to travel. The same kind of trial and the same kind of conviction attended his attempts at Tragedy and Farce. One trial in each sufficed to put him down, though the examples of Literature, like those of Oratory, show us that first failures are often only preparations for ultimate masterly success; and that first successes are even more frequently the preludes to an after succession of failures. In the meanwhile he kept up correspondence with a small number of his first and after friends. This correspondence is entitled to rank with his works, for it is the pouring forth of the collected graces of his mind. His pleasant egotism, his lively confessions, his playful humours, his airy appreciations, the genial light he throws on all he touches, and the elegant and fortunate choice of language which he uses, are all of that kind; which, as they entirely reflect the author's mind, and accomplish without effort, and perfectly accomplish what they aim at, are a work of genius.

In the year 1804, Lamb became acquainted with Hazlitt. This remarkable type of one feature of the pre-reform era was then halting between Painting and Literature. His mind was one of that class which can take nothing moderately. Its desires, its apprehensions, its suspicions, its angers, its hatreds were all on a great scale. Ardent to the very verge of prudence, hopeful to

the boundary of possibility; a keen lover, and a keen hater; boiling with rage at authorities and institutions, which he thought detrimental; merciless to those who were the representatives of those authorities, and the props of those institutions; galled by the gall that was spurted on him,—he was conscious that his powers were unappreciated and attacked, because he supported opinions which no effort of his enabled him to think otherwise than right. Had he had less confidence, or had his opinions been swayed by self-interest rather than general interest, he knew that he might have been honored and prosperous. But nature had formed him of material too hard and tough to be swayed and bent easily. Like many others of his day, he considered himself "cabin'd, cribbed, confined, bound in" by Tory machinations, in order that Tories might hold power, and absorb all the profitable places of government. He considered that the vaunted constitution of England was worn away, and that the delusion of its name only was left; like the Senate of Rome under Tiberius, and the Cortez of Spain under Charles V. But not only did he feel thus ardently on his own part, but he was angry, impatient, and disgusted when he could not make others feel like him. There was corruption, or cowardice, or truckling weakness in every one who was luke-warm, where he was at fever heat; or who supported what he wished to overthrow. He had started in life as a painter. But he started with the mind we have described—a mind that might have depicted another Last Judgment, or another Descent from the Cross, had it possessed but a little more continence

and patience. He devoured beauty. Wherever it came, and whence soever it came, it shot electric sensations through his system. The female face, a bare plain, rolling hills, drowsy woods, serene mountains—wherever beauty existed, or could be made to live, the phantom caught his enthusiastic mind, and threw it into temporary madness. But this acute appreciation and greedy appetite were their own destroyers. He saw all the magnificence he looked on in all its magnificence at once. Had his mind been slower, had it taken time to understand, had it been capable of denying itself, and been obliged to labour over the exquisite tenuities of perfection, he might have been a Rubens or a Michael Angelo. But this was wanting in him. His mind was far ahead of his hand. What his eye conveyed so rapidly to his brain, his brain refused to convey with the same rapidity to his muscles. His work on canvass looked to him but a vague caricature of what was painted within. He attempted figures. But nature that is incapable of ungainfulness, or mistake, or miscomplexion, seemed to leave nothing else to his brush. He turned grace into awkwardness, ease into constraint, flesh and blood into polluted disease. He often, we are told, after he had proceeded to some length with a work, became suddenly dissatisfied with it. He scowled at it, gnashed his teeth, and slashed it into fibre. He tried landscape. But the tame yellows and whites are not more inadequate to represent the blaze of the sun than what he drew was adequate to represent what he conceived. He turned to portraiture. It was the same. The loveliness of women and the manliness of men fled from his touch.

He knew what Vandyke, and Holbein, and Reynolds, and Gainsborough had done, and he was abashed. He could not believe his clumsy hand would ever throw off its weight, and spring at the inspiration of his mind into color, expression, ease, and life. His too ardent and too complete appreciations threw him into mistrusts. A cooler and a duller man would have raised himself to the Presidentship of the Academy with half his ability. As it was, Hazlitt grew discontented, and tried to overcome the unsatisfactory uses of his pencil with his pen. He began to put down the ideas of what is beautiful and right upon paper. He found this, even in the beginning, more compliant than the pencil had been. It was just after he had written his first work on the Principles of Human Action, that Lamb became acquainted with him; and nearly the last painting he executed was a portrait of Lamb.

Hazlitt was a Unitarian. His father had been a Unitarian minister. Lamb was a Unitarian, and Coleridge was then lapsing from Unitarian to Anglican. This unity of religious sentiment had established a kind of free-masonry between them, and Hazlitt had the further welcome to Lamb in being an unqualified admirer of Coleridge. He had heard the dreamy philosopher preach. He had walked ten miles to hear the sermon, and had sat under it, entranced with all the visions of his enthusiastic nature, warm with youth, and tingling with hope. Hazlitt thus came to Lamb like an ambassador from a great potentate. He could not have brought welcomer credentials. Friendship began at once. It had no pro-

cesses and inductions to undergo. The stranger was received as a brother and a peer.

Lamb, however, could never appreciate Hazlitt's politics. It was not that there was any particular difference in their essentials; but they assumed a vast difference in their expression. Lamb was quiet and jokey over matters that went like harrows through the indignation of Hazlitt. Where Lamb looked on evil as an inevitable blot, or at least a hardened excresence, Hazlitt viewed it as a disease, generated by neglect and indifference. To be passive under removable injuries was to him criminal, to Lamb it was often prudence. He had been brought up with the idea that men were of two classes; those that devour, and those that are devoured. If you are born among the class that devour, you have nothing to do but to keep your prey properly penned and shackled. If you are born among the latter unfortunates, it is your duty to resist the shackles and the teeth to the utmost. He believed that one-tenth of society preyed upon the other nine-tenths. He found himself with the victims, and he was impatient whenever he saw a fellow-victim contemplate the fangs and ravenous appetites of their devourers with patience. The want of patience, as we said, drove an incipient Angelo from the brush. The want of patience often estranged Hazlitt from his best friends, and handed to his worst enemies the sharpest weapons that they used in order to torture him.

Few of Hazlitt's friends remained so firmly by him as Lamb. Though their minds were in texture so widely different, there was a similarity in taste between the two

that linked them together, and destroyed all other estrangements. Hazlitt would often be violent or sullen; violent in conjuring up wrongs, or in letting his fancy loose over their enormity; sullen when Lamb coldly checked his inflamed fancy with a dry joke. But that desire after beauty, that over-estimation of it, and over-delight in it, which had chased him from the easel, loosened his tongue with eloquence in criticising art. There he pounced with unerring power on the genius of a picture, and described it with a glow akin to his feeling. Lamb was hardly less devoted. But he selected beauties, and his knowledge of the art was limited, compared with that of Hazlitt. He was only the more delighted to hear his friend expatiate. He felt himself with an informing spirit, when such canvass as that which Raphael, Leonardo, or Titian has covered was the subject of appeal. Hazlitt threw open the doors of the painting, and every separate beauty walked forth. He glowed with words almost equal to the colors they described. He traced their curves and lines in language that seemed to bend and sweep under the folds of its subjects. The heart and soul accompanied the describer, and gave such life to the discourse that every listener felt his knowledge grow under it. Lamb has admirably rendered some of the lessons of this delightful schooling in his Paper on the barrenness of Imagination in the Productions of Modern Art.

There was another point on which the two friends were as hearty, and even more closely conjoined. Hazlitt's ripe sense of beauty, and constant search for it, had, when

he took to literature, driven him to our old poets. Among them he found the same kind of high thought, boldly and satisfactorily rendered, as he found in the pictures of Titian and Leonardo. He plunged among the Elizabethan Dramatists—he gorged his taste with their overflowing thought—he sorted and arranged their excellent parts—he formed almost a philosophy out of them; and spurned the later and more artificial literature as the degenerate offscourings of one of the brightest eras of the human intellect. It was impossible for sympathy to be more perfect than that of Lamb on these points. He had no more doubt of the fact of such a conclusion than he had of the nearest way from the Temple to Leadenhall Street. Here all was clear, single, and hearty between them.

In the year 1817, when the first signs of the coming on of a speedy determination of the political questions that divided the party in office from the party out of office began to show itself, Mr. Blackwood, the enterprising bookseller of Edinburgh, started his celebrated Magazine. It was professedly undertaken to afford a mouth-piece to the Ultra Tories, similar in character to that which was enjoyed by the Whigs in the *Edinburgh Review*. The *Edinburgh Review* had originally derived its reputation from the youth and recklessness of its writers. The dash, ease, and dare-devil, reck-nothing character of their articles had amused a generation of readers, at the expense of authors who formed perhaps the thousandth part of that generation. Somebody must suffer was their motto, it matters not who, since the suffering of one will be the

amusement of a thousand. The artifices which sportsmen exercise against foxes were employed against poets and Tory-politicians. The hounds were always out; and some unfortunate fox was always breaking cover for the amusement of the field. Banter, sarcasm, argument dwindling into farce, and facetiousness curdling into irony had long been the weapons of an unbearable warfare; when Blackwood came out to render a Roland for the Oliver. The supplies for the enterprise were undertaken by the same kind of writers as had undertaken those of the *Edinburgh*. Young men fresh from College, with a sufficiency of learning, overflowing liveliness, unreined humour, unlimited powers of irritation, a keen scent for game, and ardent buoyancy in the pursuit of it; with the remorse of the butcher, and the scruples of the hangman; soon gave to the Whigs that kind of telling blows, which the Whigs had inflicted on the Tories. Up to this time, Magazines had been stupid household articles, written to amuse the wife and daughters at home, while husbands were enjoying themselves in a more substantial manner abroad. They were made up of flat essays on the Virtues and the Fashions, wearisome apologues teaching some disagreeable maxim, a few dull pages of dissertation on the history of a castle or some historical site, or such questions as whether bachelors should be allowed to mix with married people; and whether Maria was justified in rejecting Alexis, because he visited her in untidy garments. Let us not be too self-satisfied. The spirit of the old Magazines still survives; but it has now sought refuge in the *Family Herald*, and

the *London Journal*, and is satisfied with Penny opinions, where of old it asked Two Shillings as its fee. This melancholy stuff was accompanied by the poetry of school-girls and clerks. The tale had not yet made its appearance, or at any rate only assumed the form of an expanded anecdote; or a pure invention in the Old English Baron style.

Blackwood reformed all this. Even he eschewed fiction at first, but the whining school of periodical literature vanished as soon as his magazine appeared. There were no more of the Eudosia Essays on Affectation, no more of the sentimentals of the drawing-room and school-room. Slaughter and the fear of it, right and left, was then the first article of the new canon. Laughter at any price the next. The London Whigs and Radicals soon began to smart under the strokes of the young Edinburgh Tories. The *Gentleman's Magazine* and the two Monthlies were all old-fashioned dealers in spiritless weakness, provided for the weak. Their powers against Blackwood were those of sparrows against kites. They fought shy of the formidable enemy; and for three years, Blackwood ruled supreme in monthly literature. The first opponent that lifted an arm with any weight in it against the Edinburgh organ was the *London Magazine*. It was started without any political pretensions, and professed only a contempt for the mean food, which its forerunners supplied to a generation, which was growing dainty. But it soon appeared, from the character of editor and contributors, that it was a rival of Blackwood. Whomsoever Blackwood defiled, the London praised; and

the praise of Blackwood was mostly countermanded in the London. Hazlitt became one of its chief supports, and Hazlitt had been a favorite target for the Blackwood arrows. It was not long before the two magazines got into mortal encounter, such an encounter as is seldom carried on between periodicals, for it led to a meeting between Scott the Editor of the London and a Blackwood supporter, which resulted in the death of Scott.

It was this Magazine that Hazlitt invited Lamb to join. It seemed as if Lamb, having tried himself in all his favorite literary points with ill-success, had given up authorship altogether. And, but for the circumstances under which the London was started, and the persuasions of Hazlitt, it would have probably been so. Even as it was, he seemed reluctant to appear before the world again; for the Magazine had been seven months in existence before he contributed to it. It was in August, 1820, that the first Essay of Elia appeared. It was the fine one recalling the faded glories and faded clerks of South Sea House—a leaf from the earliest of Lamb's world experiences. From this date, the articles were continued pretty regularly, month by month; and it is a singular circumstance, that though the best writings of Hazlitt, Lamb, Clare, and De Quincey appeared in this journal—writings which are eagerly bought now, and form part of the classics of a classic age of literature, the Magazine itself was a failure. It only lived five years. Yet it would be impossible to pick from any ten volumes of periodical matter, matter so full of genius, spirit, and thought as these ten volumes contain. It was in fact too far ahead

of the taste of the age. The refinement and delicate finish of the articles were thrown away upon readers hardly emancipated from the drivelling of the Old Monthly and the Ladies' Museum. The coarse boldness and clever abuse of Blackwood demanded neither taste nor reading to introduce it. It was at once tolerated, like those rough impudent fellows, who are sometimes the amusement of the company they insult, and are applauded as much for what they do not know, as for what they know. The best writers in Blackwood, after a life of fifty years, are now, as it were, dead men; while, in a life of five years, the *London* gave to the world four or five geniuses, whose writings the world will not willingly let die.

When we look at these Essays which Lamb contributed to the *London*, as a whole, we are struck at once with their novelty and their familiarity—that which is common, and that which is uncommon in them. When Lamb tried himself at poetry, he evidently threw himself into a constrained position—he uttered by rule—he succumbed to method. He was again trammelled by his admiration of Mackenzie, when he wrote Rosamond. In John Woodvil, the old Dramatists were continually admonishing him to be careful of his words, and weighty in his thought; and the radiant faces of Elliston and Munden were constantly before him, pricking him on to fun and comicality, when he was writing Mr. H. Since those days of attempt and experiment, he had ceased to expect gold from the crucible. He left his pen to wander up and down, noting, in a careless immethodical way, whatever struck his fancy, and writing it in all the hurry

of a half-hour, snatched from ledgers bursting with the wealth of India. All anxiety was gone. There was no more need to weigh paragraphs, or metres, or hunt down jokes, or unriddle events in an artificial manner. He took up his pen in the uppermost mood of the moment, and gossipped over the tattle and observation, which a few weeks had produced, to expectant correspondents. He had no more idea that there was any reputation to be won in this so-called gossip than that there was reputation in entering Teas, Chintzes, Silks, and Indigo in their proper folios. But it was this very absence of art, which the habit of twenty years, almost without literary interruption, had perfected, that was destined to become inimitable. Had Lamb trained, schooled, marked out, and checked his mind in these overflowings, he might have missed both his excellence and his singleness. When Hazlitt persuaded him to resume authorship, and help the *London*, Lamb had thrown all his ambitions to the winds; he had long ago subsided down to an ordinary mortal. His friends he saw above head, and he delighted to see them there. They were his stars, his constellations, and he was content to remain a mere observer of their stately movements. What then could he do to help the Magazine. He had no will to rub his intellect on the hard flint of popular coolness, till it struck out the fire of poetry. The days of poetry were over. They were linked with the excursive flights of Coleridge, and the warm hopes of a life just begun, now damp and mildewed.

His other literary experiments held no more inducement to him than poetry. He was forty-five years old;

and the mind, instead of looking wakefully forward, was more inclined to turn reflectively backward. But the purveyors of Magazines cannot be particular. A due quantity of digestible matter has to be provided at a given moment, and the lighter the food, the more welcome, in many cases, to the devourers. Lamb's habit of writing down facts, fancies, bamboozlements, and dry humors to his correspondents was the only literary resource at hand; and what if he considered the *London* some Manning or Wordsworth, and gossipped away to it as he was used to do to his living correspondents. Such off-hand stuff might fill a few magazine pages well enough. He chose soundly. The idea was one of the happiest for literature. Without ambition, without object, without subject, without care or pretension, Lamb sat down to write anything that would flow easily off his pen, and English Literature has obtained a book that has no second. It is unique. Art wrought from the absence of all art. The most subtle design growing spontaneously out of the neglect of all design. The mind entirely native, because neither presumption or care moved the writer to great expectations.

When twenty-eight essays had been written, the recommendation of all valuable opinion induced the publisher of the Magazine to collect them, and publish them separately. Their circulation in the Magazine did not hinder them of a hearty, if not a boisterous reception. They were not scrambled for and devoured, as the Waverly novels were at that time; but they commanded a steady sale, which has been constantly increasing. Appreciation of the good, unless it be a good tale, or the

work of one who has already secured readers by popularity, is generally slow. It would be a keen satire on human intellect to set forth how many readers Aurora Floyd and Elia obtained in the same time. But we must be satisfied that Elia was cordially received at all. A new line of thought, and one so removed from ordinary direction, has seldom been better welcomed than Lamb's masterpiece. And here we may halt to consider why it is a masterpiece.

The three stages, which intellect has generally passed, are those of Poetry, Philosophy, and Tale. Poetry preserves the facts of the past, Philosophy arranges them, and the Tale reproduces them. Poetry adds to what it preserves, Philosophy separates the true from the false, and the Tale affects to reproduce the true in a re-arranged order. Poetry adds mind to dry action, and gives it variation and color, Philosophy tries and proves it, and industriously discriminates the composition, the Tale gives a harmonious sequence to dry action, and in a manner doubles experience. Poetry digs the ore from the mine, loaded with extraneous matter, Philosophy separates the ore from the dross, the Tale coins the ore for circulation. But these three elements of the intellect, as they may be termed, may be combined. If such mere convenient classifications were mathematical, it is obvious that there would be only three changes on the three elements; but if we take those elements partially, we get an infinitude of changes. Three of the important variations which these elemental forms undergo are History, Drama, and Essay. History is the combination of Philosophy with the Tale. The Drama is the combination of Poetry with the Tale,

and the Essay, of Poetry with Philosophy. We must not, therefore, expect the Essay till the more elementary forms of intellect have laid in a store of material with which it can work. Poetry must have done much, and Philosophy must have laid up a stock of its deductions. Whenever this is accomplished, the Essay has all its materials ready, and we find it then mostly make its appearance. It becomes therefore the vehicle of the reason as well as of the imagination. It unmakes, and it remakes. But it does not do this after the manner of History, which is restricted to facts; for it employs not only facts, but what might be facts; not only what has been, but what might have been. It speculates as well as defines, and roves as often as it pursues a trodden track. The rules, which in a great measure make History and the Drama subordinate to codes, are here all thrown by. The Essay has no real superior authority, but is either trifling or profound; either something very like Philosophy, or something very like Poetry; some mere froth and yeast of the intellect, or something that gives out its very essence; at one time a trifle to amuse, at another a sermon to correct, at another experience to warn, at another speculation to enlist, at another observation to direct us.

The modern Essay had its origin in France, and there at once assumed a completeness and a greatness, which has perhaps never been equalled. There can be no more dispute that Montaigne is the greatest of Essayists, than that Shakspere is the greatest of Poets, or Columbus the greatest of geographical discoverers. Never has a human being dared to open up his own mind, and lay

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himself so nakedly forth to the world as Montaigne has done. He reserves nothing. The most pitiable thoughts and feelings are as frankly confessed as the most approved ones. Shakspere, Cervantes, Moliere give us an infinite variety of bad and good features in separate individuals. But the limits of their arts made them necessarily select. They could not waste on one individual that invaluable genius, which was equal to the prominent characteristics of many. Cervantes has approached the nearest to a thorough outer and inner delineation; but even his exquisite art, as it works on the mind of Don Quixote, becomes tame and feeble beside the unmeasured dissection of Montaigne. We almost tremble for ourselves, as if some other nature were looking into us, and laying open our souls, as the butcher lays open the organs of the victims of his knife, while Montaigne removes, one by one, the coverings of his soul. We almost seem to bleed under the revealer. For though no two men are exactly alike, and Montaigne has only been able to describe the soul of one man, out of the infinitude of men, and that one man Montaigne; yet, soul agrees with soul, as closely as body with body; and we feel the same confidence in the descriptions of the Essayist as we should in the descriptions of the Anatomist, even though they were over the body of a murderer. For murderer as he is makes no alteration in the functions of the right and left auricle, or the number of his ribs. He is equal there with the most delicate and tender lady, that cannot set her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness. And thus it is that we peruse Montaigne's Essays with as much emotion, as if he

were reading our thoughts and feelings from the book of our lives before the Great Judge. He seems to be indicting our mortal actions, and preferring our weaknesses, in the shape of charges against us. For though the reader may say, this is not me; this is another man—weaker perhaps, more fallible, more erroneous than I am; yet this subterfuge will not do. As we read on, the internal evidence is continually protruding that this exposer of weakness, this betrayer of the secrets of human nature, this unfolder of the living organism of blindness, wilfulness, uncertainity, was a superior man—a man to be classed with the Platos and Lockes—a rare example in the race. If then we can delude ourselves that we are not as he is, it will be rather that we are worse than he is; and that the humiliating picture that makes us tremble is a flattered likeness of ourselves.

Now there is no quality so apparent in these wonderful productions as their unpremeditated carelessness. The brain seems to overflow in them. There is no effort to squeeze or compel the mind to express itself; but it does so from sheer overplus, from the uneasiness of accumulation. Confession flows forth, desultory, idly; swayed hither and thither by the accident it encounters, like a brook along a meadow. What we call art seems altogether wanting; there is no arrangement, no construction, no sign of any end sought. Montaigne runs on as unregardedly as one boy does to another. The uppermost thought has the uppermost word, and the last experience is set down while its novelty is fresh upon the thought. "I see better than any other," he says, "that all I write are but the idle

whimsies of a man that has only nibbled upon the outer crust of the Sciences in his nonage, and only retained a formless general image of them, who has got a little snatch of everything and nothing of the whole *a la mode de* France. For I know in general that there is such a thing as Physic, a Knowledge in the Laws, four parts in Mathematics, and in part what all these aim and point at; . . . but to dive further than that, and to have cudgelled my brains in the study of Aristotle, . . . I have never done it. Neither is there any one art of which I am able to draw the first lineaments and dead color, insomuch that there is not a boy in the lowest form in a school that may not pretend to be wiser than I, who am not able to pose him in his first lesson; which if I am at any time forced upon, I am necessitated in my own defence to ask him some universal questions, such as may serve to try his natural understanding; a lesson as strange and unknown to him as his to me. I never settled myself to reading any book of solid learning but Plutarch and Seneca, and these, like the Danaids, I eternally fill, and it as constantly runs out, something of which drops upon this paper, but very little or nothing stays behind."* Let us turn to another passage. "I have often thought even the best authors a little out in so obstinately endeavouring to make of us any constant and solid contexture. They choose a general air of a man, and according to that interpret all his actions, of which if some be so stiff and stubborn, that they cannot bend or

* Ch. 25, Bk. 1. We use the quaint translation of Cotton, which harmonises very agreeably with the quaint old French.

writhe them to any uniformity with the rest, they are presently imputed to dissimulation. . . For my part, I must ingeniously declare that the puff of every accident not only carries me along with it, according to its own proclivity, but that, moreover, I discompose and trouble myself by the instability of my own posture, and whoever will look narrowly into his own bosom, will hardly find himself twice in the same condition. I give my soul sometimes one face, and sometimes another, according to the side I turn her to. If I speak variously of myself, it is because I consider myself variously. All contraries are there to be found, in one corner or another, or after one manner or another. Bashful, insolent, chaste, lustful, prating, silent, laborious, delicate, ingenious, heavy, melancholic, pleasant, lying, true, knowing, ignorant, liberal, covetous, and prodigal. I find all this in myself more or less, according as I turn myself about, and whoever will sift himself to the bottom, will find in himself, even by his own judgment, this volubility and discordance. In a word, I have nothing to say of myself entirely simply and solidly without mixture and confusion. *Distinguo* is the most universal member of my logic. Though I always intend to speak well of good things, and rather to interpret such things as may fall out in the best sense than otherwise; yet such is the strangeness of our condition that we are sometimes pushed on to do well even by vice itself, if well-doing were not judged by the intention only. One gallant action therefore ought not to conclude a man valiant. If a man was brave indeed, he would be always so, and upon all occasions. If it were a

habit of virtue, and not a sally, it would render a man equally resolute in all accidents; the same alone as in company; the same in lists as in battle. For, let them say what they will, there is not one valour for the pavement and another for the field. He would bear a sickness in his bed as bravely as a wound in the field, and no more fear death in his own house than at an assault. We should not then see the same man charge into a breach with a brave assurance, and afterwards torment himself, and pule like a woman for the loss of a trial at law, or the death of a child. When being a detected coward to infamy, he is constant in the necessities of poverty and want—when he starts at the sight of a barber's razor, and rushes fearless into the sword of an enemy; the action is commendable, not the man.*

The Essays of Montaigne have been succeeded by similar kinds in every literature; but by none that even aspires to rival those of the wonderful old Frenchman. Montaigne was born in the year that Henry VIII. married Anne Bullen, and died four years after the Spanish Armada was dispatched to invade England. He was thus contemporary with the best age of our Dramatic Literature; but he preceded that of France by a generation. The trustworthiness, grace, freedom, and abandonment of Montaigne's performance determined almost the law of the Essay. All, more or less, were framed after the model he had set; but all fell far short of their model. What in Montaigne was spontaneous, became in his imitators constraint, or licence. We need notice only two forms

* Bk. 2, Ch. 1.

which the Essay assumed in England. The first was that of Lord Bacon. Far inferior to those of Montaigne in Philosophy, and wholly wanting in that open revelation and unswathing of the soul, which is the very life-blood of Montaigne's work, Bacon's Essays are almost entirely Philosophic. They deal in mere analyses. They are little other than axioms, and read almost like a collection of Proverbs. But even as Philosophic treatises, they will not bear much scrutiny. They deal only in broad generalizations; which are apt enough in the main, but fail when tried on special examples. They have the advantage of short texts in being very quotable, and hence perhaps much of their reputation. Few read them, and a very small part of those read them for pleasure. The matter of them can hardly be said to advance knowledge, even on what they profess to treat. One of Bacon's famous axioms is that "Reading makes a full man, writing an exact man, conference a ready man." Now, reading may not only leave a man very empty; but a man may be a very full man without any reading. Neither is writing the basis of exactness, since every day's experience shows that the readiest writers are generally the most inexact; and the readiness of conference depends on the preparation which the mind has had before, and its natural inclinations. Still the axiom holds generally, and has perhaps not been without value in determining half and half minds—minds that want a guide to point them out the way to any indirect excellence.

The other type of the English Essay is that of Addison. With far less sententious philosophy than

Bacon, Addison has given us far more real and practical philosophy. The hard texts of Bacon repel, the winning readiness of Addison's moral discourses invite. We read him for pleasure, and his sense works imperceptibly into our inclinations, and directs them as if it were their own. Bacon has hardly left anything of the Essay behind but the name. Addison has never wandered from it, but has blended Poetry and Philosophy—Observation and Deduction—the eye and the mind so imperceptibly together, that we rove with him over society in general; or visit some especial character, as Sir Roger de Coverly; or turn to criticism, or allegory, with only a repeated sense of the right there is in the writer to be thus various and expansive. Without imitating Montaigne, Addison has secured our sympathy with his ideas, second only to the charm of the great Frenchman. His genius was unequal to the effort, or perhaps too fastidious, or too inert, to withdraw the coverings from his own mind; but in the general descriptions of classes, and his portrait of Sir Roger in particular, he has shown his mastery over that kind of character, which humour reproduces most vividly and pleasantly. From Addison to Charles Lamb, the Essay remained as Addison made it; and even such an original mind as that of Dr. Johnson consented to follow, at a humble distance, with the Spectator constantly before him. Lamb is the first that broke away from Addison, and he stands at present as a new example, servile to none; but strong in his own free unaided individuality.

And it is this emancipation from models—this free individuality that has made Elia a masterpiece. With a

whole century of industrious Essayists before him—with all the laws of the Essay as it were written in the Spectator—with the clamour of applause ringing in his ears, and daring the writer to innovation, it almost seems as if Lamb had never read either Spectator or Rambler; so thoroughly free is he from all that looks like imitation of them. He is as far from Addison as Addison is from Montaigne; and he has fixed such a bar of originality over his works, that it would be far more daring to make Lamb a model than it was to make Addison one. It is almost as perilous to imitate Lamb directly as it would be to imitate Montaigne. For though Montaigne, as we said, gave rise to the Essay, it was the form not the thought that raised up imitators. Both Montaigne and Lamb stand out of the course of imitation, and what is genius in them would in second-rate hands become absurdity. The Spectator came from Montaigne, but was not of him. But though we have Spectators multiplied without end, under the names of Loungers, Guardians, Idlers, there is no series of Essays so closely resembling Montaigne, as the feeblest of these resembles the Spectator. Though Addison's genius was supreme, it was very imitable; but Montaigne's genius was inimitable, and we think it will be found that Lamb's most valuable part is as safe as Montaigne's from the spoiler. Had the Spectator been as lonely in English literature as Montaigne's work is in French, we know not but its reputation, great as it is, might not have been greater. We look upon that genius to be greater which has soared beyond the flight of followers, than that which has provoked a host of imitators. For imitation is an inner

prompting that the same kind of power is present as is displayed in the writing it imitates, though it may be not in the same quantity. It shows the existence of a less rare material. It is mostly that kind of genius wherein the intellect is accompanied by form; the mechanical enters into it, and art has a very important share in the work. Whereas in such instances as Montaigne and Lamb, art is nowhere. The mind makes its method as it runs along. It has no more path than forked lightening; but strikes through the darkness in a series of uncertainties.

Of the three writers—Montaigne, Addison, and Lamb, Montaigne is the simplest. He uses the fewest tools for his work. His observation of himself, his comparison of himself with mankind in general, and his deductions on the source and causes of tempers, dispositions, humors, and inconsistences, backed with reference to ancient authors, constitute almost all his material. Addison uses acute observation on manners and disposition, he works the imagination for his tales and allegories, he employs reason in his moral expostulations and discourses, he sometimes uses gentle sarcasm, but is oftener alive in humor. He is a critic, a poet, a divine, a novelist, a moralist, a satirist, a humorist by turns. Montaigne is a Philosopher, Egotist, Moralist, but all the other principles are wanting. Lamb is more component than Montaigne; but less so than Addison. Humor, Character, Confession, and Reminiscence form the staple of his Essays. He scarcely clashes either with Addison or Montaigne; though humor and observation of character belong to Addison, and confession is the governing soul of Montaigne.

Yet their methods of using these common materials are so different, that it is only the approximate nature of language that forces us to include them under the same heads.

Let us instance these threads of Lamb's work. Wit and humor are sometimes confounded, and even exact writers have praised Addison for wit, when it is really doubtful whether he ever wrote anything that could come within a definition that distinguishes wit from humor. The lax use of the word wit formerly, when it was applied to cleverness rather than any special excellence, has not yet left it an undoubted province of its own; but, if we trust the most approved examples of it, we can hardly deny that it involves a certain quantity of ill-nature, as well as quick nature; and can seldom be said to be triumphant, till it has inflicted a sting somewhere. The conversation in the School for Scandal is by no means unimportant as evidence on the question.

"*Lady Sneerwell.* You are a cruel creature Sir Peter —too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.

Sir Peter T. Ah, madam! True wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of.

Lady Teazle. True, Sir Peter, I believe they are so near akin, that they never can be united."

The answer of Lady Teazle here is perfect wit.

In a dispute between Sir William Lewis and Wilkes, the former in his anger cried, "I'll be your butt no longer." "With all my heart," said Wilkes, "I hate an empty one."

When Dr. Johnson, in a political dispute on Reform,

tauntingly asked Dr. Crow who was the first Whig, the latter was puzzled, and the Doctor thought he had clenched his opponent, when he told him that the Devil was the first Whig, for he attempted to set up Reform in Heaven. "Indeed," said Dr. Crow, "then if he was a Whig in Heaven, he must have been the first Tory when he got into Hell."

These examples are as distinguished by their sharpness as their readiness—they are as angry as they are clever. Pope, with a glow of wit and severity, describes Addison as so "obliging that he ne'er obliged," and the Dedication-seeker is described in his first Satire with wit after wit in successive cuts. The poets throng around him—

> "An undistinguished race,
> Who first his judgment asked, and then a place;
> Much they extolled his pictures, much his seat,
> And flattered every day, and some days eat:
> Till grown more frugal in his riper days,
> He paid some bards with port, and some with praise,
> To some a dry rehearsal was assigned,
> And others, harder still, he paid in kind.
> * * * * *
> But still the great have kindness in reserve;
> He helped to bury whom he helped to starve."

It is not impossible that wit may sometimes be amiable. But it is almost constant enough to become a law, that it takes the opposite course, and soon becomes humor when it becomes kind. It is this sort of wit, this kind of wit or humor, that abounds in Addison and Lamb.

Everything we do, all our actions, even all our thoughts, are composed of two elements or sides—the

comic and the serious. In general observation, the two are blended and neutralised. Humor and wit consist in a deliberate or rapid separation of these elements, and in selecting one to the neglect of the other. Addison had the power of resolving everything he observed into its component parts, and, as his taste inclined him to one or the other, he presented it to his reader. Lamb had the same power; but while Addison merely separated, and presented his production without any other alteration, Lamb added other points, and illustrated the dismembered observation with similarities. Lamb's humor became therefore richer than that of Addison; but some would say it lost in taste what it gained in color. It was at any rate separated from it farther than that of either Fielding or Goldsmith. Let us illustrate our observation.

Speaking of the singular fashion of his days, which led ladies to use black patches on the face as party favors, as well as touches to bring out the life of beauty, Addison says, "I must here take notice that Rosalinda, a famous Whig partisan, has most unfortunately a very beautiful mole on the Tory part of her forehead, which, being very conspicuous, has occasioned many mistakes, and given a handle to her enemies to misrepresent her face, as though it had revolted from the Whig interest." In another paper he says, "I remember in particular, after having read over a poem of an eminent author on a victory, I met with several fragments of it upon the next rejoicing day, which had been employed in squibs and crackers, and by that means celebrated its subjects in a double capacity. I once met with a page of Mr. Baxter under a Christmas

pie. Whether or no the pastry cook had made use of it through chance or waggery for the defence of that superstitious viand I know not, but on perusal of it, I conceived so good an idea of the author's piety that I bought the book." In this quiet smiling manner, Addison proceeds, paper after paper. He merely seems to expose the pleasant side of things, leaving their angry side untouched; and, by that means, without exaggerating or misrepresenting, gives to his subjects interesting features, which ordinary minds do not perceive, because they are mixed up with their other element. We feel that Addison is not telling us anything very new, but something very agreeable. It is this faculty which has made his Sir Roger de Coverley such an attractive delineation. The mirthful part of the old Squire's character is separated from any alloy it might have; and while nature is left to pursue her own course, she is more boldly exhibited by rejecting every disagreeable taint. Men and women have follies enough in the descriptions of Addison, but they have only a moderate share of strong vices. There cannot be a greater contrast than that which the writings of Swift and Addison exhibit. These celebrated men were contemporaries and friends, and were both gifted with original genius. But while Addison looks only on the pleasant side of men's character, Swift chooses nothing but the repulsive. Swift's men might have been born in Bedlam, and brought up in Newgate. When they do good, they mistake it for evil; and use what is agreeable and beneficial merely to secure criminal ends, as the pickpocket entertains his victim with interesting warnings, to

draw off the attention, and secure his prey. We have nothing to do with Swift here; but he affords an excellent illustration of a man, who chose exactly the opposite pole of human action to that chosen by Addison. And there is no doubt that the bitterness of his abilities, embittered by disappointment, exaggerated the evil he described with such laughter and such scorn; while Addison only followed nature in his separation of the good from its baser connections.

Let us look at a specimen or two of Lamb's humor. In the Two Races of Men he thus expands over the borrower. "What a careless even deportment hath your borrower! what rosy gills! what a beautiful reliance on Providence doth he manifest—taking no more thought than lilies. What contempt for money—accounting it (yours and mine especially) no better than dross. What a liberal confounding of those pedantic distinctions of *meum* and *tuum*, or rather, what a noble simplification of language (beyond Tooke) resolving these supposed opposites into one clear intelligible pronoun adjective. . . He cometh to you with a smile, and troubleth you with no receipt, confining himself to no set season. Every day is his Candlemas, or his Feast of Holy Michael. He applieth the *lene tormentum* of a pleasant look to your purse—which to that gentle warmth expands her silken leaves, as naturally as the cloak of the traveller, for which sun and wind contended. He is the true Propontic which never ebbeth,—the sea which taketh handsomely at each man's hand." Here the character, whom Addison would have dismissed with one or two happy epithets,

Lamb fences about with description, drawn from the storehouse of his fancy. Every separate item in the portrayal, rings responsively in the mind, and we conjure up, as he goes on, individual after individual, who answers to its detail. The humor is contained in this perfect truth. If it were not strictly within the bounds of nature, it would be caricature, or burlesque. But it is the carefulness with which the writer observes his responsibilities that heaps the merit high. He runs daringly loose, and scatters his sketches one after the other, as he goes. Yet every one is a likeness. Every one has its type so common, that nobody is at a loss to refer to his example; few but have had, at one time or other. to suffer under the lance of the bleeder.

We take another specimen. One of Lamb's friends went to New South Wales, and in his Essay on Distant Correspondents, he thus, in the banter of overflowing humor, asks after the inhabitants of that questionable soil. "I cannot image to myself whereabout you are. When I try to fix it, Peter Wilkins' island comes across me. Sometimes you seem to be in the *Hades* of *Thieves*. I see Diogenes prying among you with his perpetual fruitless lantern. What must you be willing by this time to give for the sight of an honest man. You must almost have forgotten how *we* look. And tell me what your Sydneyites do? are they thieving all day long? Merciful heaven, what property can stand against such a depredation! The Kangaroos—your Aborigines—do they keep their primitive simplicity un-Europe-tainted, with those little short fore puds, looking like a lesson framed by nature to

the pick-pocket. . . We hear most improbable tales at this distance. Pray is it true that the young Spartans among you are born with six fingers, which spoils their scanning? It must look very odd, but use reconciles. For their scansion, it is less to be regretted; for if they take it into their heads to be poets, it is odds but they turn out, the greater part of them, vile plagiarists. Is there much difference to see, too, between the son of a thief and the grandson? or where does the taint stop? Do you bleach in three or four generations? . . . Do you grow your own hemp?—What is your staple trade—exclusive of the national profession, I mean? Your locksmiths, I take it, are some of your great capitalists."

Here, without a word of wit, is that which all the wit in the world could not improve. Out of the vilest and most hated of the vices, a sweet and curious felicity of thought, and admirable power of separating the wholesome from the putrid, has served as a dish that the most fastidious appetite may relish. The same power of running away and collecting example is seen here as before. Diogenes, the pud of the Kangaroo, the six fingers, the young Spartans, the hemp, and the locksmiths are all so many collected illustrations, throwing up the subject in bolder and bolder relief till it stands before the mind's eye with as much of form and color as a picture necessarily ideal can do. And all this intellectual painting is accompanied with intellectual pleasure. The subject is one which hacks at the root of firm society, yet here it assumes playfulness and gratification—we laugh at the new grimaces, which an old injury can be distorted into.

We have said that Addison and Lamb have left sufficient for comparison in their treatment of character. But while Addison mostly sets himself to describe classes, Lamb mostly attaches himself to individuals. He has some friend, or some personal recollection in his mind. Addison's Whig and Tory ladies, his general remarks on women in the 15th number of the Spectator, his character of Tom Touchy, Will Wimble, and Will Honeycomb are all, as it were, heads of clans. On the contrary, Lamb's Evans and John Tiph, the South Sea House clerks; Boyer, the Christ's Hospital Pedagogue; Thomas Coventry and Samuel Salt, the Old Benchers of the Middle Temple, and Elliston, the Comedian, are all flesh and blood men. Lamb too had his palette for broader sketches, and in his Mrs. Battle, Scotchmen, Quakers, Captain Jackson, we have instances of class drawing. Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley is represented in so many situations, that we are more familiar with him than we are with half the men we know. Could we meet him in the street, we should have no hesitation in holding out the hand to him, and gossiping on the grouse disease, or the prospects of the next meet in the neighborhood. We know his mind as familiarly and more confidently than we do that of many a friend of a dozen years' standing. We know his smiling nature could never be permanently wrinkled, and we should dash into freedom and ease with him accordingly. The Captain Jackson of Lamb is but a scene in a character, compared with Sir Roger de Coverley; but it is a scene that has never been surpassed. The main features of the individual are, by a few apparently random

dashes, thrown up; and the man could hardly have been improved, however he might have been elaborated, by twenty such other introductions. Sir Roger de Coverley and Captain Jackson, and Parson Adams, and George Primrose belong to the same side of human nature—sunny and happy; because they look on other men as good as themselves, and confide in them as truly as in their own thoughts. "There is a set of men," says Addison, "whom I have lately called Blanks of Society, as being altogether unfurnished with ideas, till the business and conversation of the day has supplied them. I have often considered these poor souls with an eye of great commiseration, when I have heard them asking the first man they have met with, whether there was any news stirring, and by that means gathering together materials for thinking. These needy persons do not know what to talk of till about twelve o'clock in the morning; for by that time they are pretty good judges of the weather, know which way the wind sits, and whether the Dutch mail be come in." We may set Lamb's description of the Scotch character against this. "You must speak upon the square with him. He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country. 'A healthy book!'—said one of his countrymen to me, who had ventured to give that appellation to John Buncle,—'Did I catch rightly what you said? I have heard of a man in health, and of a healthy state of body, but I do not see how that epithet can be properly applied to a book!' Above all you must beware of indirect expressions before a Caledonian. Clap an extinguisher upon your irony, if you

are unhappily blest with a vein of it. Remember you are upon your oath. I have a print of a graceful female after Leonardo da Vinci, which I was showing off to Mr. * * * *. After he had examined it minutely, I ventured to ask him how he liked *My Beauty* (a foolish name it goes by among my friends)—when he very gravely assured me, 'that he had considerable respect for my character and talents' (so he was pleased to say,) 'but had not given himself much thought about the degree of my personal pretentions' The misconception staggered me, but did not seem much to disconcert him."

No character has ever been touched more happily than Elliston. "To descant upon his merits as a Comedian would be superfluous. With his blended private and professional habits alone I have to do; that harmonious fusion of the manners of the player into those of every day life, which brought the stage boards into streets and dining-parlors, and kept up the play when the play was ended.—'I like Wrench,' a friend was saying to him one day, 'because he is the same natural, easy creature *on* the stage that he is *off*.' 'My case exactly,' retorted Elliston—with a charming forgetfulness, that the converse of a proposition does not always lead to the same conclusion—'I am the same person *off* the stage that I am *on*.' The inference at first sight seems identical; but examine it a little, and it confesses only that the one performer was never, and the other always, *acting*. And in truth this was the charm of Elliston's private deportment. You had spirited performance always going on before your eyes, with nothing to pay. . . He carried

about with him his pit, boxes, and galleries, and set up his portable playhouses at corners of streets, and in the market places. Upon flintiest pavements, he trod the boards still; and if his theme chanced to be passionate, the green baize carpet of tragedy spontaneously rose beneath his feet."

We have said that Lamb has one characteristic, or rather one occasional trait that brings him into competition with Montaigne. By this we only meant that he employs the same form for communicating his ideas. He frequently reveals his motives, and confesses his habits and opinions. But these revelations are mere trifles compared with the perpetual recurrence of Montaigne to himself. In Lamb confession blurts out now and then, and never becomes really what might be termed egotistical. It glows agreeably out of Oxford in Vacation, in the chapter on Ears, in Old China, in the Praise of Chimney Sweeps, and others. But it is a mere confession of habits, notions, and incidents of his life,—little bits of autobiography, that show how difficult it was for his mind to conceal itself, or to soar among shadows, or conjure up miserable skeletons of reality, when the flesh and blood reality was at hand. But he never like Montaigne aims at turning the mind inside out, and looking as it were behind the soul.

Such are the points in which these remarkable Essays may be compared with the most celebrated that have preceded them, and in such points do they hold themselves freely and boldly original, even when they occupy departments of thought similar to the Essays of Addison and Montaigne. It only remains that we endeavor to look at them by their own light.

The mind of Lamb was perpetually toying with itself—it was always ready to fly at every hint, like a kitten at every moving thing,—it seldom or ever drained a subject; but rather sipped at it, and with fluttering uncertainty, winged away to new fragrance and new sweets. Hence most of his essays suggest, as well as bestow. He is especially fond of definition, and sometimes throws a whole poem, or a lot of poetical hints into the dry dictionary skill of showing how many ways one object may be looked at. Take his definition of a Poor Relation. "A poor relation is the most irrelevant thing in nature—a piece of impertinent correspondency—an odious approximation—a haunting conscience—a preposterous shadow, lengthening in the noon-tide of our prosperity—an unwelcome remembrancer—a perpetually recurring mortification—a drain on your purse, a more intolerable dun on your pride—a drawback upon success—a rebuke to your rising—a stain in your blood—a blot on your scutcheon—a rent in your garment—a death's head at your banquet—Agathocles' pot—a Mordecai in your gate—a Lazarus at your door—a lion in your path—a frog in your chamber—a fly in your ointment—a mote in your eye—a triumph to your enemy, an apology to your friends, the one thing not needful—the hail in harvest—the ounce of sour in a pound of sweet." All these ramifications of one object work upon us by their aptness—an aptness that surprises us like wit, and which only want to fall as rejoinders to become wit.

A few instances of the different moods of these Essays, after what we have already instanced, are hardly

needed to show that Elia is the masterpiece we asserted it to be. We will, however, give two or three specimens. Let us look at Lamb in his serious mood. No Essay, not even excepting any of Addison's, so deeply thrusts reflection into the reader as that on New Years' Eve. Lamb's nature did not allow him to cover up his feelings in conventionalisms; and hence, although some have drawn the sword against the sentiment of this Essay, we cannot but believe it has still penetrated deeper than sermons into their hearts. In musing on the last night of the year, over the changes of time, he tells us freely and openly that he fears death, and then with almost the pathos of a Claudio, he pleads for life. "Not childhood alone, but the young man till thirty never feels practically that he is mortal. He knows it indeed, and, if need were, he could preach a homily on the fragility of life; but he brings it not home to himself, any more than in a hot June we can appropriate to our imagination the freezing days of December. But now, shall I confess a truth? I feel these audits, but too powerfully. I begin to count the probabilities of my duration, and to grudge at the expenditure of moments and shortest periods, like misers' farthings. In proportion, as the years both lessen and shorten, I set more count upon their periods, and would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am not content to pass away 'like a weaver's shuttle.' Those metaphors solace me not, nor sweeten the unpalatable draught of mortality. I care not to be carried with the tide that smoothly bears human life to eternity; and reluct at the inevitable course of destiny. I am in

love with this green earth; the face of town and country; the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacle here. I am content to stand still at the age to which I am arrived; I, and my friends, to be no younger, no richer, no handsomer. I do not want to be weaned by age; or drop, like mellow fruit, as they say, into the grave. Any alteration on this earth of mine, in diet or in lodging, puzzles and discomposes me. My household gods plant a terrible fixed foot, and are not rooted up without blood. They do not willingly seek Lavinian shores. A new state of being staggers me."

Now look at this specimen of true humor. He is speaking of St. Valentine's day, and its love stationary. "What authority we have in history or mythology for placing the head quarters and metropolis of God Cupid in this anatomical seat (the heart) rather than in any other is not very clear; but we have got it, and it will serve as well as any other. Else we might easily imagine upon some other system, which might have prevailed for anything which our pathology knows to the contrary, a lover addressing his mistress in perfect simplicity of feeling; 'Madam my *liver* and fortune are entirely at your disposal;' or putting a delicate question, 'Amanda, have you a *midriff* to bestow?' But custom has settled these things, and awarded the seat of sentiment to the aforesaid triangle, while its less fortunate neighbors wait at animal and anatomical distance."

The Beggar again is by the subtle process of humor exalted from the lowest to the highest rank. The

ingenuity that runs through one idea after another, easing Lazarus of his burdens, and enfranchising him by ingenious subtleties is done admirably. "Rags, which are the reproach of poverty, are the Beggar's robes, and graceful *insignia* of his profession, his tenure, his full dress, the suit in which he is expected to show himself in public. He is never out of the fashion, or limpeth awkwardly behind it. He is not required to put on court mourning. He weareth all colors, fearing none. His costume hath undergone less change than the Quaker's. He is the only man in the universe who is not obliged to study appearances. The ups and downs of the world concern him no longer. He alone continueth in one stay. The price of stock or land affecteth him not. The fluctuations of agricultural or commercial prosperity touch him not, or at worst but change his customers. He is not expected to become bail or surety for anyone. No man troubleth him with questioning his religion or politics. He is the only free man in the universe."

Such a passage as the following is not describing character, it is sitting and observing it. "Sarah Battle was none of that breed. [Half-and-half players.] She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul, and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-faced partner, a determined enemy. She took and gave no concessions. She hated favours. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight; cut and thrust. She held not her good sword

(her cards) 'like a dancer.' She sate bolt upright; and neither showed you her cards, nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side—their superstitions; and I have heard her declare, under the rose, that hearts was her favorite suit."

Elia is not a large book. Indeed it is so small that many who seem to consider that it is necessary for a man to be voluminous to be worthy the recollection of his species may be doubtful of the right of its author to a very high reputation. It would be no use to argue against such logic, though we fear it is much more general than its absurdity would lead us to suppose. Bulk and genius are correlatives in the belief of the majority. Yet when we take down the volumes of those who have written best, and written most at the same time, we shall be soon convinced that however great a space their works may occupy, that part of their works on which their reputations rest and on which they will depend for remembrance, make but a sorry fraction of the whole. The Novels, Satires, and Pamphlets of Cervantes have perished. He survives in Don Quixote alone. It is a matter of great likelihood that Goethe's Tales, Dramas, Sketches, Travels, Novels, Treatises will all ultimately find Faust alone surviving their ruin. Dryden's voluminous pen, which scarcely rested for thirty years, will live in the better parts of Absalom and Achitophel alone,—in perhaps less than a thousand lines. Pope must rely on four Satires and the Rape of the Lock. Ben Jonson, out of thirty dramatic pieces, can only depend on three. It is not at all improbable that the L'Allegro and Penserosa of

Milton will survive Paradise Lost; and that the life of Paradise Lost itself will be only prolonged by the genius of its two first books. Southey has scarcely given a single pledge of durability, unless it be his Life of Nelson; and Scott, we fear, will rather be read in Scenes than in entire tales, unless Waverley and the Antiquary should secure this honor. Shakspere alone seems to have secured the greatest certainty of immortality. Fully one-half of his thirty-six plays are masterpieces, and are as likely to interest posterity, as anything we have received from the ancients. Amid then these ruins—these fragments of the Temples and Theatres in which we worship and amuse ourselves, we may confidently expect that Elia will have its site. If Shakspere be their Colliseum, and Milton their Jupiter Stator, Lamb may be the fragment of some triumphal arch, and verify the line of Keats that

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

While we have been lingering over Lamb's works, we have lost all traces of his life. We left him only twenty-five years old, and we have been carried twenty-three years farther on—nearly double—in commenting on his works, and especially on Elia. However the attractions of his life are rather his works than his movements. And yet his movements are no unimportant part of his life, since in the course of it, he changed his residence no less than ten times. He was born in the Temple precincts, and did not quit the place of his birth till he was twenty years old. The incorporation of any place with our youthful ideas generally fixes it in our affections. The whole life of Lamb showed that this, his first residence,

was his favorite residence. He experimented on other places, but twice afterwards he returned to the Temple. The scene of the terrific tragedy that deprived him of his mother was No. 7, Little Queen Street. The family had removed thither the previous year. It was lodgings; for during his life, Lamb was only for a few months master of an entire house—he had only a short opportunity of knowing what is the Englishman's castle, of which so much has been said. After residing in these lodgings about five years he removed to Pentonville. There an old maid servant died, which brought on another of Miss Lamb's occasional fits of insanity. "Mary," says Charles in a letter to Coleridge, "will get better again, but her constantly being liable to such relapses is dreadful; nor is it the least of our evils, that her case, and all our story, is so well-known around us. We are in a manner marked." This lowers his spirits. He writes in a moping style, and says he is completely shipwrecked. But a short taste of melancholy satisfies a healthy spirit, and Lamb is soon alive again at the thoughts of getting out of Pentonville, and hiding the marks and infirmities of his situation in the midst of London. He obtained an offer of rooms in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. His landlord was a friend, who knew his story. "I have got three rooms," he says in a letter to Coleridge, "(including servant) under £34 per year. . . So we are once more settled." It was during this summer that Lamb paid one of those visits to Oxford, which he has commemorated in his Oxford in vacation—when he used to "play the gentleman, and enact the student;" when in "moods of

humility," he says, "I can be a sizar or a servitor. When the peacock vein rises, I strut a gentleman commoner. In graver moments, I proceed Master of Arts." Oxford and Cambridge were, next to London, his favorite sojourns. The antiquity of the places, their libraries, their grave monkish superiors, wandering among old-fashioned courts and cloisters, stirred his Elizabethan mind to action, and almost realised some scenes of those quaint plays he loved to pore over. He there found things in pretty much the same condition as they were in the days of Isaac Walton and Quarles. The boisterous world touches these retreats very lightly; and Lamb, when he visited them, felt as if he was visiting a dozen generations back. They gave vigor and sub-reality to his dreams.

In the summer of the same year he visited Coleridge, at Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire. We have already alluded to Coleridge; but he is such a recurring individual in Lamb's life, and his own character was made up of so many inconsistencies, that we shall not be repeating ourselves in again referring to it. There has never perhaps been so great a literary disappointment as Coleridge. He took everybody by surprise, and satisfied nobody. He was always projecting, always beginning, always promising; yet, whatever he projected, he left unbegun; whatever he begun, he left unfinished; and whatever he promised, unperformed. Systems of Philosophy, Epic Poetry, Tragedies, Encyclopedias, Newspapers, Translations, Criticism, Theology, the Regeneration of the Human Race were not too much for the ambition of one towering intellect, and

the compass of one short life. He threw forth the faint twinkling beacon of them all in monologues, that were delightful to every one that listened to them, but which had the singular effect of scarcely ever leaving a distinct idea behind them. Whatever Coleridge accumulated, he had the most ingenious way of retaining that ever man had. He seemed to be always imparting, and yet he never imparted. His hearers were mute with astonishment, and so attentive and interested that hours seemed to have only the span of minutes, while Coleridge was dilating on the limits of reason, or the fallibility of sense, or the pure domain of freewill; and yet no listener could ever tell where their instructor had planted his limits, what constituted the fallibility of the eye or the touch, or where freewill begun or ended. The charm of the speaker was one of the most extraordinary that has ever been exercised, because it was one which in a common individual would have been calculated to weary. Words, when they issued from the lips of Coleridge, seemed to have collected from his musical intonation, a fascinating power, that made no matter whether they were reasonable or unreasonable—whether they meant anything, or were mere coverings of ashes. His mind was philosophical, without one single principle of exactness in it. It was logical, without deriving any consequence from its premises. It was analytical, without disturbing the wholeness of any prejudice. It was synthetical, without constructing any solid idea from the loose material which was strown on every side of it. Yet all these disadvantages of a common mind were actual advantages to Coleridge. Had there been nothing else to mark his intellect but these

discordances, it would never have been known on the outside of an alehouse. But all this loose material was reflected from the mirrors of his imagination, and changed shape, color, and arrangement as beautifully as the bits of glass, beads, rags, and spangles change their order in the kaleidiscope. Its want of coherence gave it variety. His hearers listened to all the material of philosophy, they saw and felt that there was mathematical shape in the arrangement, and elaborate color in the composition, yet still they could not determine what was the value that it represented; they were astonished, and went away wondering much, and knowing nothing.

Those who were first acquainted with Coleridge considered his mind wholly poetic. Those who looked at him a little later thought the poetry had dried into theology. Those who only became acquainted with him later still would have claimed him as one of the most infatuated of Trancendentalists. Those who knew him latest of all would have found all these mixed together, and the Poetry, the Theology, the Philosophy brightening one another without clearing one another; but rather looming through summer mists, where everything is brilliant, hazy, sensuous, and indistinct. There was no subject that Coleridge shrunk from, but every subject he touched merged at last into that illimitable Philosophy, which expanded it into vapor, and left it like a meteor wandering in space. He would take a prawn, or the vertebra of the fish he had been dining on, and from that text spin the gravest sermon. From the smallest he would expand to the greatest—from the shrimp to the

leviathan—from the scavenger of the sandbanks to the great Behemoth. Then the flux and reflux of the waters, the currents and wanderings of the tropic and polar floods would carry him forward, without sail or rudder, impelled by wind, tide, and ground-swell, withersoever the thought of the moment carried him; till, after a hundred side driftings, the prawn would re-appear, and there would remain a sense as sweet and fickle as the remembrance of exquisite music, and no more reproducible.

Some of those who have heard him talk by hours at a time without interruption, or only with an interruption that he impatiently never replied to, have endeavored to state what he said. But that which took hours to deliver left nothing but half a page of disjointed opinion, or commonplace anecdote. The aroma, the incense of the whole discourse consolidated into a small globule of solid matter. Monologues, which disciples have extolled in praise, which would be extravagant if applied to Comus, have thinned down in the transfer from Coleridge to his hearers into a dozen lines of matter; but little beyond that of other clever men. Yet when we consider this poor fruit from such a magnificent flower, we are only the more astonished at those rich resources, which could clothe, decorate, and ennoble what, in their nakedness, seem incapable of distinction. But in the mind of Coleridge, light and darkness were hardly in opposition. The distinct pained him. He could not bear the hard known form of the positive world, with its facts, and its definition. He hated men and systems, that dealt in ideas, which could not be disputed. The value of all he wrote, and of all he spoke,

consisted in suggestion more than in statement; in foreshadowing, rather than in portraying; in catching the attention with something over which the imagination could spread its transitory colors. When an object that lay vague and bodiless in his thought, began to assume the shape of something real, it lost half its value, it was neglected, and had to be re-dissolved and dispersed before it regained its place in the estimation of Coleridge. He hated Hume, and Voltaire, and Paley, and Locke, and Adam Smith less for the principles of their philosophies than for the distinctness with which they laid them down, and the absolute transparency of their language. Whatever he could see clearly, he despised; but the misty, which could be magnified at will, and took the very shape, size, and quality which was popular with him at the moment, was a phantom to play with, to build with, to promise with, to expand upon, to delight over. Like Turner he was greatest in painting air. It was not the solid earth, the busy populations with their plain facts of misery, wealth, pomp, rags, sadness, exultation, sweat, and ease that attracted him; but shapeless nations, from which every contradictory element was expelled, and whose institutions, thoughts, and realities were distillations of his imaginary nothings.

But this frail vapor, which was always forming and altering, composing and decomposing, was unsubstantial nutriment for a whole life. And nothing in the life of Coleridge is more uppermost than the fact that to the dreamer it was no vapor, but a choking smoke, and a consuming fire. From his school days to his death days,

it was continually tossing him from place to place, and from experiment to experiment. It drew him to begin a hundred things, but allowed him to conclude nothing. It gave him such a distaste for the world, that everything in it seemed on the verge of passing away from the hands of what virtues remained in it to those of the vices only. Philosophy was becoming materialism, religion was becoming atheism, government by intelligence was becoming government by the passions, democracy was striding on, and trampling with its broad clouted shoe every delicate blossom and beautiful flower. Mechanism, or the authority of wood and iron, was over-ruling the authority of mind and muscle. Instinct was bearing down reason. A new convulsion was coming on, threatening to experience and knowledge what the French revolution threatened and carried out to Classism and Exclusiveness. The overthrow of the evil in 1789 was about to be retaliated by that evil in the overthrow of the good.

But this universal ruin—dictated from the despondent mind of Coleridge, and pictured with all the fantasy of his creative spirit, was necessary to the ease of that mind. Despair and hope, like all the other principles of that wonderful arcana, were next door neighbors. That misery which sunk his eloquence to the lowest drone of melancholy sickliness was the grave whence all its mortality was to put on immortality. Among these relics, morsels, dust, and ashes of worth and excellence, there remained the minute life-germs still. It was the office of the true philosopher to discover and encourage those germs to a new birth. Hidden and dead as they appeared, nothing

could really destroy them; and it was the object of Coleridge to point out, in his expansive way, how this new birth was to be brought about. This was the consolation of his discourses—the buoy that kept him floating. This to the most acute and intent of Coleridge's listeners seemed to be the definite end of his vague lamentations over the tendency of political outcry, political economy, scientific devotion, and the materialism of life and thought.

Coleridge was the youngest son of a clergyman of the church of England. He was one of a large family, and was educated at Christ's Hospital, he was transferred thence to Cambridge, and there his life of instability and experiment began. He was intended for the church, but he read himself into Unitarianism before he had half completed his university course. He fell in love, he proposed and was rejected; and in the midst of his studies started off and enlisted as a common soldier in a cavalry regiment, though he had scarcely ever mounted a horse. He used to write love verses for one of his smitten companions, who, at that price, rubbed down his charger. His classical attainments betrayed him to one of his officers, and procured his discharge. He went to visit a friend at Oxford. There he met Southey, who was intimate with Coleridge's friend. Southey was a student at Oxford, as Coleridge had been at Cambridge. They were charmed with one another. Both were enthusiasts. Both believed that the world was nearly worn out with disease, and both believed themselves capable of curing it. The same idea that Coleridge finished with, he thus began with. Out of

this sympathy Pantisocracy was formed, and Lovell, a friend of Southey, was added to the design. Southey threw up Oxford, and they all proceeded to Bristol, without a penny in their purses, and nothing to breast the world with but magnificent ideas. But these funds were ample to poets and philanthropists. They were bills at a long date, which were to be met at first by several series of lectures. Their present necessities were valiantly provided for by a volume of poems by each. Southey, Lovell, and Coleridge meanwhile fell in love with three sisters. But Lovell, who married first, opposed Coleridge, as his intended brother-in-law; and the contrivers of universal love and unity started their scheme with a fiery quarrel. Southey had successfully begun lecturing on History. Coleridge offered to deliver a lecture for him on the Roman Empire; but he forgot his promise, and another smart quarrel ensued between the brotherhood. Coleridge then married on the prospect of a guinea and a half for every hundred lines of poetry, and took a cottage at Clevedon, near Bristol. His rent was five pounds per year, and his parlor was white-washed in a primitive fashion. Here Pantisocracy was realized for a few weeks on the banks of the Severn. The hills, the trees, the woods, the waters were all that man ought to desire. Poetry furnished the white-washed parlor more daintily than a palace, and poetry for a little while brought heaven and earth together. In a short time he found that villagers were too inquisitive, and books were too far off. In less than two months he was in Bristol again. But close lodgings in a populous city were unbearable after the country; and, on the invitation

of a friend at Nether Stowey, he removed thither. At this time he was writing a volume of poetry, on which he had been feeding his wife and himself since their marriage. He had eighteen other projected works in his head; but it was almost line by line that Cottle obtained the work he had paid for. At last he projected a newspaper. He went and canvassed for it himself, and preached Unitarian sermons in the pulpits of Birmingham and Nottingham. At Bath he preached in blue coat and yellow buttons and white waistcoat, from Isaiah viii., verse 21, and turned his discourse into an harangue on the Iniquity of the Corn Laws. In the afternoon he preached on the Hair Powder Tax, to a congregation of seventeen. Three of the seventeen left their pews before the sermon was over. The Watchman, which was the name of his newspaper, only lived ten numbers out, and these numbers were only issued by efforts, that seemed to Coleridge's procrastinating nature like death-throes. He had talked the paper into a thousand subscribers. He soon wrote it down to half the amount. He then projected a school, and had the promise of three pupils. Then he was offered a pulpit at Shrewsbury. He was near concluding, when one of those sincere friends, whom Coleridge was fortunate enough to attract, intervened. Josiah Wedgewood, brother to the celebrated Etrurian, offered Coleridge a hundred a year, if he would not accept the bait. Coleridge hesitated—declined the £100, and accepted the ministry. Wedgewood then offered £150. Coleridge accepted the £150, and declined the ministry. On this burst of good fortune, the poet seemed a new man. He had complained that all his projects had

failed, that he only wanted bread and cheese to ease his mind against the daily necessities of life, that with this provision, he should yet be able to leave mankind an earnest of that great genius, which he felt the mere vulgar rampart of providing for the appetite alone prevented from freedom. He started for Germany, and read German poetry and German philosophy day and night. Schiller and Kant—the elucidator of human action, and the elucidator of human thought held him between them. His Schiller enthusiasm gave us Wallenstein. His Kant enthusiasm gave broader wings and wider space to that indefinite dissertation, which had hitherto been fixed and solid to what, under the demonstrator of understanding and reason, it was destined to become. Coleridge returned. He went to London, and engaged to write politics for the *Courier* newspaper. In a few weeks the fit was over. Politics were too solid matter. Poetry and philosophy must be the objects of his life, and these required country solitudes. He removed to Cumberland. Here his health broke up under hard reading of schoolmen, philosophers, and divines, and he went abroad for health, and left his wife behind him. He had chosen Malta as a sanatorium. Here the governor needed a secretary. He had heard Coleridge talk, and he had been delighted with him. He offered the situation at £800 a year, and it was accepted. But in a few months master and servant quarrelled, and Coleridge was again thrown on adventure. His life for ten years afterwards was that of the first apostles, with neither house nor home, but such as his friends and admirers afforded him. He wrote a tragedy, which failed; lectured on

Shakspere, and forgot his appointed days and times, or left his audience to gape on their benches, while he went thirty miles in a stage coach, to conduct an unprotected female to her destination. He obtained a pension from the Tories for hot congenial politics, written for a newspaper, and obtained £300 from De Quincey, the opium eater, in consequence of admiration of the philosopher. He wrote sermons for lazy clergymen, who stipulated that they must not be too good, lest they should be solicited to publish them, and he filled up the erratic intervals of monologue and work with complaints of his uneasy and embarrassed lot; and how it was impossible to bring forth fruit and flowers under his bleak aspect; and that the goading of immediate exigencies made tranquility impossible. Then in order to mitigate the tortures of a rheumatic disease, he resorted to opium. This fascinating drug seems to have been a very elixir to him. It relieved every agony for a season, and threw his ideas into an extatic dance. Day after day the dose was increased, and day after day the charm became more masterful. At last he swallowed as much as a quart in twenty-four hours, and it became a question whether life was worth the trouble of its hard conditions. Coleridge put himself under control. An attendant constantly accompanied him, to prevent the tempter from mastering the philosopher. But never was a more pitable picture presented than the struggle of the vile drug with surpassing reason. Coleridge submitted to every wish of his adviser—pledged his word, and reduced himself to twenty drops per day, and never went out without his guard. Yet he would

secretly put his opium bottle in his pocket, and when he reached a favorable spot, would send off his guard on some small errand, and steal into a druggist shop, and replenish his bottle. The last twenty years of his life were spent in the establishment of Mr. Gilmam, of Highgate, a surgeon, who regulated his opiated system, and cared for the unstable sage with a constancy that has few parallels.

With the capability then of everything, Coleridge had the stability for nothing. Yet he has left a remarkable name, and when we consider the character of the man, he has left more evidence of his life than might have been expected. But every work is a promise rather than a performance. All is preparation for the great, terminating in outline; the block rounded for the statue, but scarce a feature cut. And we, who judge him by these bits of his mind, judge him, if we may trust those who had personal converse with him, by a most imperfect standard. Coleridge was essentially words, not works. His material was more ethereal than that of any teacher who ever lived. And while no teacher ever had such enraptured disciples, no disciples were ever so inadequate to represent their teacher. The flight of humming birds, the song of nightingales, the colors of evening clouds, the floating recollections of Pasta or Malibran, the hum of summer woods could apparently be as easily transferred to words as a monologue of Coleridge. But we must not be surprised that those who listened, and those who praised, and those who attempted to record what they praised failed; when we know that Coleridge himself, when he tried to write as he spoke, threw down the pen, conquered.

He could not consolidate what was rarer than gossamer, nay than air itself. Words themselves on paper seemed to crush with their heaviness the attenuated thought, which, when merely delivered to the ear, they had buoyed up, and which was made charming by tone, manner, and countenance.

Yet from the midst of this foggy confusion, many invaluable gems of opinion and scraps of philosophy have come down to us, and serve as specimens of the mind in in its easier moods, that was commonly so difficult to catch and confine. Ideas on all the great political, religious, and literary questions of our country have been saved from these wasteful orations; and though they may not equal the reputation of the discourses they were enshrined among, they are valuable as helps to speculation; and as the ideas of one, who confessedly thought too wisely and too well for a stubborn generation. No one then can study the mind of Coleridge without reverence, no one can study his life without pity. For when all that might is compared with all that meanness, who would not be inclined to say,—Give me not, oh Heaven! magnificent imagination, wonderful powers of collecting knowledge, philosophic capability of arranging it, expansive eloquence in delivering it, unless thou combinest with the gifts, a steady purpose and a definite will. For all these greatnesses are nothing compared with that meanest supplement of them, which is the portion of the beggar and the footpad.

In the early part of 1800 Coleridge was in London, writing for the *Morning Post;* and in March, he was with Lamb, as his guest. "Coleridge" he says in a letter,

dated March 17, "has been with me now for nigh three weeks, and the more I see of him in the quotidian undress and relaxation of his mind, the more cause I see to love him. . . He is engaged in translations, which I hope will keep him this month to come." This translation was probably Wallenstein, which he published the same year. Coleridge afterwards returned to Nether Stowey, and Lamb visited him there during the summer. Talfourd says "He spent a few delightful holidays in his society and that of Wordsworth, who then resided in the neighborhood." This is an error. Wordsworth had fixed his residence at Grasmere in December, 1799, and had never resided in the neighborhood of Stowey since he left for Germany. As, however, he and his sister formed part of the company at Stowey, they must have been there like Lamb, as visitors.

Coleridge had entered smartly into politics in 1800. He wrote Philippics, for the *Morning Post;* and, while the fit was on him, he recommended Lamb to write also. Light and sparkling paragraphs were then more necessary to newspapers than they are now, since the press has resolved itself into departments, and each department has its special representatives. Punch, and his followers do the sparkling now. But jokes on manners and dress, and banter on public men, were no unimportant parts of every paper then, and this was the work which Coleridge recommended Lamb to attempt. "He has lugged me to the brink of engaging to a newspaper," he writes to Manning, "and has suggested to me for a first plan the forgery of a supposed manuscript of Burton, the anatomist

of melancholy." But in a few weeks Coleridge himself was off. Some other freak of his imagination, some airy nothing drew him away, and the matter ended. "Coleridge has left us," he writes, "to go into the north, on a visit to his god, Wordsworth. With him have flown all my splendid prospects of engagement with the *Morning Post*, all my visionary guineas, the deceitful wages of unborn scandal. . . All my intentions were but to make a little sport with such public and fair game as Mr. Pitt, Mr. Wilberforce, Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Devil, &c." Coleridge was gone to the north. He settled for a time at Keswick, gave up his politics; and Lamb, in an amusing letter, emunerates the books and other material which he had left behind. One article was "a dressing gown (value fivepence,) in which you used to sit and look like a conjuror, when you were translating Wallenstein." Another was "Tyrrell's Bibliotheca Politica, which you used to learn your politics out of, when you wrote for the *Post mutatis mutandis, i.e.*, applying past inferences to modern data. I retain that, because I am sensible I am very deficient in politics myself; and I have torn up—don't be angry, waste paper has risen forty per cent., and I can't afford to buy it—all Buonaparte's Letters, Arthur Young's Treatise on Corn, and one or two more light-armed infantry, which I thought better suited the flippancy of London discussion than the dignity of Keswick thinking. Mary says you will be in a passion when you come to miss them; but you must study philosophy. Read Albertus Magnus de Chartis Amissis five times over after phle-botomising—tis Burton's

recipe—and then be angry with an absent friend if you can."

In 1797, Lamb and his sister had paid a visit to Coleridge at Nether Stowey, soon after the poet settled there. During this visit, Coleridge sprained his foot, and was unable to accompany his visitors on their rambles. While they were on one of these excursions, on a sweet summer evening, Coleridge consoled himself in his confinement by composing a poem on the disappointment he felt in not being able to be with them :—

"Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance, even when age
Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness! They meanwhile,
Friends, whom I never more may meet again
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told.
* * * Now, my friends, emerge
Beneath the wide, wide Heaven, and view again
The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two isles
Of purple shadow! Yes, they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hungered after nature, many a year,
In the great city pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity.
* * *
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Bent its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it, deeming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)

Had crossed the mighty orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or, when all was still,
Flew creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of life."

This poem, though written in 1797, was not published till this year, (1800) and caused Lamb thus to remonstrate against the epithet used to describe him. "For God's sake (I never was more serious) dont make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses. It did well enough five years ago, when I came to see you, and was moral coxcomb enough at the time you wrote the lines to feed upon such epithets; but, besides that, the meaning of gentle is equivocal at least, and almost always means poor-spirited. My sentiment is long since vanished. I hope my virtues have done sucking. I can scarce think but you meant it in joke." In an after letter he says "In the next edition of the Anthology, please to blot out gentle-hearted, and substitute drunken dog, ragged-head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the gentleman in question."

The lodgings in Southampton Buildings, from which Lamb expected so much satisfaction; were only held for a few months. "I am going to change my lodgings," he writes in the latter part of 1800, "having received a hint that it would be agreeable at our Lady's next feast. I have partly fixed upon most delectable rooms, which look out (when you stand a tip-toe) over the Thames and Surrey Hills. There I shall be able to lock my friends out, as often as I desire to hold free converse with my immortal

mind; for my present lodgings resemble a minister's levee, I have so increased my acquaintance since I resided in town." And after actual removal he thus describes his new residence. "I live at No. 16, Mitre Court Buildings. . . N.B.—When you come to see me, mount up to the top of the stairs—I hope you are not asthmatical—and come in flannel, for it's pure airy up there. And bring your glass, and I will show you the Surrey Hills. My bed faces the river, so as by perking up upon my haunches, and supporting my carcase with my elbows, without much wrying my neck, I can see the white sails glide by the bottom of the King's Bench Walks, as I lie in my bed."

The incipient engagement on the *Morning Post*, which the abrupt departure of Coleridge had broken off, led afterwards to a real engagement on that paper, and on the *Albion*. Lamb has described the sort of office he fulfilled in his Essay on Newspapers thirty-five years ago. "In those days every Morning Paper, as an essential retainer to its establishment, kept an author, who was bound to furnish daily a quantum of witty paragraphs. Sixpence a joke—and it was thought very high too—was Dan Stuart's settled remuneration in these cases. The chat of the day, scandal, but above all, dress furnished the material. The length of no paragraph was to exceed seven lines. A fashion of flesh, or rather of pink-colored hose for the ladies luckily coming up at the juncture when we were on our probation for the place of Chief Jester to Dan's paper, established our reputation in that line. . . . Somebody had said, that to swallow six cross-buns daily, consecutively for a fortnight, would

surfeit the stoutest digestion. But to have to furnish jokes daily, and that not for a fortnight, but for a long twelvemonth, as we were constrained to do, was a little harder exaction." He goes on to say, that as he was employed from eight to five in the city, and liked "a parting cup at midnight, as all young men did before these effeminate times," he was obliged to devote to this joke-making, "that time; of an hour, or an hour and a half's duration; in which a man, whose occasions call him up so preposterously, has to wait for his breakfast. . . . No Egyptian taskmaster ever devised a slavery like to that, our slavery. . . Half a dozen jests in a day, (bating Sundays too) why it seems nothing. We make twice the number every day in our lives as a matter of course, and claim no Sabbatical exemptions. But then they come into our head. But when the head has to go out to them—when the mountain must go to Mahomet—reader try it for once. . . From the office of the *Morning Post*, . . by change of property in the paper, we were transferred, mortifying exchange! to the office of the *Albion*. . . What a transition—from a handsome apartment, from rose-wood desks, and silver inkstands, to an office—no office, but a den rather, but just redeemed from occupations of dead monsters, of which it seemed redolent—from the centre of loyalty and fashion, to a focus of vulgarity and sedition. . . . F., without a guinea in his pocket, and having left not many in the pockets of his friends whom he might command, had purchased (on tick doubtless) the whole and sole Editorship, Proprietorship, with all the rights and titles (such as they were

worth,) of the *Albion*, from one Lovell, of whom we know nothing, save that he stood in the pillory for a libel on the Prince of Wales. With this hopeless concern—for it had been sinking ever since its commencement, and could now reckon upon not more than a hundred subscribers—F. resolutely determined upon pulling down the Government in the first instance, and making both our fortunes by way of corollary. For seven weeks and more did this infatuated democrat go about borrowing seven-shilling pieces and lesser coin, to meet the daily demands of the stamp-office, which allowed no credit to publications of that side in politics. An outcast from politer bread, we attached our small talents to the forlorn fortunes of our friend. Our occupation now was to write treason. . . Blocks, axes, Whitehall tribunals were covered with flowers of so cunning a periphrasis . . that the keen eye of an Attorney-General was insufficient to detect the lurking snake among them." At length he tells us that after sundry paragraphs had been marked at the Treasury, in order to be submitted to the Law officers, an unlucky or lucky epigram on Sir James Mackintosh, when on the eve of his departure to India to reap the fruits of his apostacy, disgusted the best patron of the *Albion*, and sealed its fate. "The *Albion* is dead, and my revenues have died with it, but I am not as a man without hope. I have got a sort of opening to the *Morning Chronicle*."

The following year (1801) he received a hearty invitation from Wordsworth, with whom he had now been a year acquainted, to visit him at Grasmere. Lamb declined, and in his reply threw out some very material

points in his character. "Separate," he says, "from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. . . My attachments are all local, purely local—I have no passion to groves and valleys. The rooms where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a book-case which has followed me about like a faithful dog (only exceeding him in knowledge) wherever I have moved, old chairs, old tables, streets, squares where I have sunned myself, my old school—these are my mistresses—Have I not enough without your mountains? I do not envy you. I should pity you, did I not know that the mind will make friends with anything. Your sun, and moon, and skies, and hills, and lakes, affect me no more, or scarcely come to me in more venerable characters, than as a gilded room with tapestry and tapers, where I might live with handsome visible objects. I consider the clouds above me but as a roof beautifully painted, but unable to satisfy the mind; and at last, like the pictures of the apartments of a connoisseur, unable to afford him any longer a pleasure. So fading upon me, from disuse, have been the beauties of nature, as they have been confidently called." On another occasion he says "For my part, with reference to my friends northward, I must confess that I am not romance-bit about nature. The earth and sea and sky (when all is said) are but as a house to dwell in."

This is a very sincere picture of Lamb's mind with respect to nature, and the source of it is very natural—the entire separation from such scenes from childhood. It will rarely be found that any one, who has passed his

childhood in a great city, ever becomes a hearty lover of nature. Nature may astonish him, and he may frequently pay her visits; but he will do the same thing to a prodigy, and be moved in the same manner. Leigh Hunt said that a mind must be a poor one, which is affected by heaps of earth. When a mountain is reduced to such a proposition as this, the inference is direct enough. There is no defect in the statement, nor in the deduction; and it shows how unable philosophical truths may be to reach the correctness they aim at. When a citizen, pent among his riot and motion, describes a mountain as a heap of earth, the idea is correct enough. And a heap of earth, as it exists in the upturned thoroughfare of a city, is an object unimpressive enough. But when this heap of earth becomes as big as a county, "subject to all the skiey influences," it has, as it were, received a soul; the material becomes intellectual, and reacts upon mind. It is this transformation which the city-bred cannot realize, except in the actual presence; and it was this defect which left Lamb uninquisitive after secrets among the noble retirements of nature. He has again and again repeated how dear every city association was to him. It had been the food on which his mind had fed from infancy. He had looked on the city as a constancy, on nature as an accident. We may become wearied of a continual succession of the same objects, but even this weariness is not a lasting feeling. Even a continued succession of the same objects becomes in time more dear and more regarded than any change that can be substituted for it. It is chiefly in youth, while the mind is still in a state of growth, and unfixedness is the

whole condition of life, that the yearning for the new, and the untried, and the unseen prevails. But when once business, or marriage, or any other of the imperative conditions of existence is reached, the mind generally makes its election out of its circumstances, and remains true to its choice through life.

Lamb's principal friends—Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth—were professed lovers of the country, especially Wordsworth. We shall not go into the distinction of town and country taste now; but we think it a highly important one. The assumption of rustic feelings and ideas is the chief principle that has been at work on modern poetical thought, and is indeed the great agent which has given character, and we may also add feebleness to the literature which has distinguished this century. The principle only affected Lamb indirectly, and indeed we are not sure that it was not a very fortunate circumstance for him that he had such a low opinion of mountains and the country, and hence kept his attention so closely fixed on man and life, which were material more harmonious with his feelings.

When Lamb, therefore, expressed his distaste for mountains, and openly put scenery among his indifferences, he only spoke out what others have concealed under a pretended regard. But, however, this was a constant confession with Lamb. He never thinks it in the least degree narrow-minded to set up London above every thing the country can produce. "Streets, markets, theatres, churches, Covent Gardens, shops sparkling with pretty faces of industrious milliners, neat sempstresses, ladies cheapening,

gentlemen behind counters lying, authors in the streets with spectacles, . . . lamps lit at night, pastry-cooks' and silver-smiths' shops, beautiful Quakers of Pentonville, noise of coaches, drowsy cry of mechanic watchmen at night, with bucks reeling home drunk; if you happen to wake at midnight, cries of Fire and Stop Thief; inns of court, with their learned air, and halls, and galleries; old book-stalls. These are thy pleasures, O London! with the many sins. For these may Keswick and her giant's brood go hang." And in declining Wordsworth's invitation, he again returns to his taste; which, to such a sentimental worshipper of nature as Wordsworth, must have sounded like grating noises in his ear. "I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead nature. The lighted shops in the Strand and Fleet Street; the innumerable trades, tradesmen and customers, coaches, wagons, playhouses; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden; the very women of the town; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles—life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print shops, the old book-stalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes—London itself a pantomime and a masquerade—all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me without a power of satiating me. The wonder of the sights impels me into night walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from

feelings of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider, what must I have been doing all my life, not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes."

Yet, after all, in the following summer (1802) Lamb and his sister, without any announcement, started for the Lake country. Coleridge was then settled at Keswick, when his friends burst suddenly upon him. "He received us," says Lamb, "with all the hospitality in the world, and gave up his time to show us all the wonders of the country. He dwells upon a small hill, by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. . . We entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows Skiddaw, &c. I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night like an enchantment; gone to bed as it seemed for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning. Coleridge had got a blazing fire in his study, which is a large antique ill-shaped room, with an old-fashioned organ . . and all looked out upon the last fading view of Skiddaw and his broad-breasted brethren: what a night!" Thus the mountains anticipated and the mountains visited had played their old prank. But Lamb had mistrusted them, and therefore found them far more impressive than he

anticipated. "In fine," he says farther on, "I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as that which tourists call romantic, which I very much suspected before: they make such a sputtering about it, and toss their splendid epithets around them, till they give us as dim a light as four o'clock next morning the lamps do after an illumination." They visited Grasmere, Ambleside, Ullswater, Helvellyn, and ascended Skiddaw. "Oh its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries, so famous in song and ballad! It was a day that will stand out like a mountain, I am sure, in my life." This seems a very satisfactory apology for his former indifference. On first reading such enthusiastic passages, we are inclined to turn to such incidents as first love and conversion for their parallel. But, after all, it was but the surprise acting on a subdued rather than excited imagination. He writes to Coleridge on his return, "I feel I shall remember your mountains to to the last day I live. They haunt me perpetually. I am like a man who has been falling in love unknown to himself, which he finds out when he leaves the lady." "In his latter years," says Talfourd, "I have heard him, when longing after London, among the pleasant fields of Enfield, declare that his love of natural scenery would be abundantly satisfied by the patches of long waving grass, and the stunted trees, that blacken in the church-yard nooks, which you may yet find bordering on Thames Street."

When Goldsmith said that the chief incidents in the

life of Dr. Primrose consisted in his migrations from the blue bed to the brown, he noted a very large class of very important lives. The men who have been of most value to society, have been the centres of the fewest exciting changes. Thinkers remain much in the same place, and interfere but little in the squabbles around them. Men, who are unimportant, whose lives are unfelt, and of whom it would have been no matter had they never lived, often stir adventure from her lowest depths, and make sufficient incidents out of half a century to set up a dozen novels. The life of Lamb was of the Dr. Primrose order. The principal events in his career were changes of lodging. For although he was constitutionally averse to new places, yet like all city dwellers, he moved in a kind of orbit, and remained nowhere very long. In 1800 he made three changes in the course of the year, and settled at last in Mitre Court, which appeared to be the spot exactly to his taste. It is in the Temple, which has nearly two acres of garden, worthy of the name, where land is worth a million an acre, where there is architecture that Cambridge or Oxford might covet, and retired squares, and quiet collegiate buildings, and sheltery cloisters, and trees that are not sickened, even in the densest part of London. This fortunate island, in the midst of a sea ever ebbing and flowing with traffic, where the great rumble of the waves of human action are ever murmuring, like breakers at a distance, was the home that Lamb had secured, when he left Southampton Buildings. But in 1809 he removed again. He did not however quit the precincts of the old Templars. "We remove," he says to his favorite corres-

pondent, Manning, "to No. 4, Inner Temple Lane, where I mean to live and die; for I have such a horror of moving, that I would not take a benefice from the King, if I was not indulged with non-residence. What a dislocation of comfort is comprised in that word moving. Such a heap of nasty little things, after you think all is got into the cart: old dredging boxes, worn-out brushes, gallipots, vials, things that it is impossible the most necessitous person can ever want. . . Then you can find nothing you want for many days after you get into your new lodgings. You must comb your hair with your fingers, wash your hands without soap, go about with dirty gaiters. Was I Diogenes, I would not move out of a kilderkin into a hogshead though the first had had nothing but small beer in it and the second reeked claret." After removal, he thus describes his new abode. "My best room commands a court, in which there are trees and a pump, the water of which is excellent cold with brandy, and not very insipid without." He had here altogether seven rooms, and it was the favorite of all his many places of abode. He had reached a salary of more than £400 a year. He could indulge all the tastes sufficient for most of his inclinations. He was in the prime of life. He was popular with every body who knew him. His happy disposition and manners were becoming a misfortune, in as much as they attracted a constant succession of visitors, who, if they gratified themselves, deprived Lamb of his repose, and almost of his thoughts. His literary acquaintance were always on the increase, for death alone deprived him of old acquaintance, and new were always ready to seize the opportunity

of his offered hand. His biographers and rememberers unite in the opinion that the eight years, during which Lamb continued in Inner Temple Lane, were the happiest of his life—his spirits were gayest, his mind was easiest, his body was healthiest, and the friends of his youth had not begun to drop away. Yet these years produced nothing of importance from his pen. A few Essays for Leigh Hunt's *Reflector*, and a garbled Review in the *Quarterly*, are the sum of his literary labors. They are the most barren years of his whole life. They carried him from the age of thirty-four to the age of forty-two, and left behind them nothing but recollections.

We may make a few remarks on the review in the *Quarterly*. It was Southey who proposed to Lamb that he should review the *Excursion*, which was first published in 1814. Lamb had always admired Wordsworth. Indeed Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey were the only living poets he read; for though many others sent him complimentary volumes, he generally valued them after the same kind of philosophy as Falstaff valued his soldiers, and "They will fill a *shelf* as well as better" was often all the attention he paid them. But Wordsworth was a far different person in his eyes; for, besides the long friendship which had existed between them, there was a studied economy in his style, an absence of that sort of writing which is now called sensational, a humility and chastity in his subjects, which were all in accordance with Lamb's taste. When, therefore, Southey proposed to him that he should undertake to introduce the long expected volume of his old friend to the public who read the *Quarterly*, Lamb

had no scruples, but a fear lest he should be scant of time to do justice to the volume. When the proposal was made he was working extra hours at the India Office. However, this was no matter. He was not fettered to a few weeks; so he wrote the article, and sent it to Gifford. But time, that alters most things, seemed to have no effect on the adamantine hatred of Gifford. The malicious spite of 1811 was no less malicious in 1814. The cynic had now the opportunity of touching Lamb on the quick, and he seized the opportunity. Lamb had taken pains with the article. "Whatever inadequateness," he writes to Wordsworth, "it had to its subject, it was, in point of composition, the prettiest piece of prose I ever writ, and so my sister (to whom alone I read the MS.) said." Gifford fell on it, however, with his shears, and cut down all its shapeliness, and left it weak, and lame, and inconsecutive. "More than a third of the substance is cut away, . . . putting his shoemaker phraseology instead of mine, which has been tinctured with better authors than his ignorance can comprehend; —for I reckon myself a dab at prose;—verse I leave to my betters. . . . I read it at Arch's shop with my face burning with vexation secretly. . . . How are you served, and the labors of years turned into contempt by scoundrels! . . . But I could not but protest against you taking that thing as mine. Every pretty expression (I know there were many); every warm expression (there was nothing else) is vulgarised and frozen. But if they catch me in their camps again, let them spitchcock me."

Though Lamb had flattered himself that he was fixed

for life, when he removed to his comfortable chambers in Inner Temple Lane, it was not so. After eight years he quitted the Temple precincts for ever, after having passed thirty years out of forty-two of his life in one part or another of it. His new removal was to a far different scene. The Temple was learned, quiet, sedate, particular; closed in at timely hours; and, as it were, separated by manners and respectability, as well as by gates and porters, from the uproar that was continually beating against its surrounding walls. Lamb's new choice was Russell Street, Covent Garden. Here quiet had no abiding plnce, but Lamb himself can best describe it. "We are in the individual spot I like best in all this great city. The theatres with their noises. Covent Garden, dearer to me than any gardens of Alcinous, where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and 'sparagus. Bow Street, where the thieves are examined, within a few yards of us. Mary had not been here twenty.four hours before she saw a thief." This situation led Lamb to frequent the neighboring theatres pretty often, and to encourage the visits of his favorites on the boards. Yet no pleasure is pure. There are drawbacks which serve to make the strongest distillation of that intoxicating beverage somewhat watery. The convenience of the theatres, and the diversion which such a busy centre as the neighborhood of Drury Lane and Covent Garden afforded, so increased the number of Lamb's visitors—always sufficiently troublesome—that they became absolute annoyance. "The reason why I cannot write letters at home," he tells Mrs. Wordsworth, "is that, I am never alone. Except my morning's walk

to the office, which is like treading on sands of gold for that reason, I am never so. I cannot walk home from the office but some officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me. . . . He at length takes his welcome leave at the door; up I go, mutton on table, hungry as hunter, hope to forget my cares and bury them in the agreeable abstraction of mastication; knock at the door, in comes Demi-gorgon, or somebody, to prevent my eating alone. . . . misanthropy, [ensues] a hatred of my interrupters, and with the hatred a still greater aversion to their going away. Bad is the dead sea they bring upon me, but worse is the dry sand they leave me on, if if they go before bed-time. . . . I assure you that it is a wonderful week in which I can get two or one evening to myself. I am never C. L., but always C. L. & Co. . . All," he concludes, "I mean by this senseless interrupted tale, is, that by my central situation, I am a little over companied."

Yet he held on in this situation for six years. The troubles of popularity increased during this time, by the general admiration which his Elia articles were exciting. Whether it was this, or some sudden wish for change is hardly apparent; but, in 1823, he took the sudden resolution of becoming, for the first time of his life, a householder. He had hitherto been either an occupier of rooms, or a lodger. But now, for the first time, he had a house at Islington—"a white house with six good rooms," as Lamb himself describes it, "and behind is a spacious garden, with vines, (I assure you) pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages to delight the heart of old Alcinous.

. . . I feel like a great lord, never having had a house before. . . . I am taken up with pruning and gardening, quite a new sort of occupation to me. . . . I do now sit under my own vine, and contemplate the growth of vegetable nature. I can now understand in what sense they speak of father Adam. I recognize the paternity, while I watch my tulips. I almost fell with him, for the first day I turned a drunken gardener (as he let in the serpent) into my Eden, and he laid about him, lopping off some choice boughs, &c., which hung over from a neighbor's garden, and in his blind zeal, laid waste a shade, which had sheltered their window from the gaze of passers by. The old gentlewoman (fury made her not handsome) could scarcely be reconciled by all my fine words. There was no buttering her parsnips. She talked of law. What a lapse to commit on the first day of my happy garden-state." Lamb had only been settled in this residence a short time when a curious incident occurred. He has himself narrated it in his own inimitable manner. It appears that the new river ran close by the house, without any protection against accidents; and that George Dyer, who was a profound day-dreamer, and very short-sighted, was punished for his natural sins in the following manner :—"Yesterday week, George Dyer called upon us, at one o'clock, (bright noon day) on his way to dine with Mrs. Barbauld, at Newington. He sat with Mary about half-an-hour, and took leave. The maid saw him go out, from her kitchen window, but suddenly losing sight of him, ran up in a fright to Mary. G. D., instead of keeping the slip that leads to the gate, had deliberately, staff in hand, in broad

open day, marched into the new river. He had not his spectacles on, and you know his absence. Who helped him out, they can hardly tell, but between 'em they got him out, drenched thro' and thro'. A mob collected by that time, and accompanied him in. 'Send for the Doctor,' they said, and a one-eyed fellow, dirty and drunk, was fetched from the public house, where it seems he lurks, for the sake of picking up water-practice. . . . By his advice, the patient was put between blankets; and when I came home at four, to dinner, I found G. D. a-bed, and raving, light-headed, with the brandy and water which the doctor had administered. He sung, coughed, whimpered, screamed, babbled of guardian angels, would get up and go home; but we kept him there by force; and by next morning he departed sobered, and seems to have received no injury." Lamb made this incident the subject of one of his Essays—*Amicus Redivivus*—and it is not uninstructive to compare the two narratives, and see how the literal facts were played with and expanded, under the easy grace of his genius.

The year 1825 was the opening of the last act of Lamb's life. Its first act had been his school-days at Christ's Hospital. Its second act was his India House clerkship, which lasted from 1792 to 1825. Its third and last act was his emancipation from business, with the liberty to do what he liked, and go where he liked. There are some instructive conclusions, or rather some conclusions that pass for instructive, in the promise of this event, and and its fulfilment. But we need not sermonize; the

sermon and its application will be best delivered in its history.

Even as early as 1805, when Lamb had only been about a dozen years in the India Office, he began to complain of his condition,—to think that there was somehow or other a peculiar form of injustice in grinding men into day-books and ledgers. "Business," he says, "is the invention of the old Teazer, whose interference doomed Adam to an apron, and set him a hoeing. Pen and ink, and clerks and desks, were the refinements of the old torturer some thousand years after, under pretence of commerce allying distant shores, &c." As years went on these complaints took a different tone. The weariness that seemed mere caprice at first, became connected with aching heads and sleepless nights. In 1814 he writes to Wordsworth, "I go back, and have for these many days past, to evening work, generally at the rate of nine hours a day. The nature of my work too, puzzling and hurrying, has so shaken my spirits, that my sleep is nothing but a succession of dreams of business I cannot do, of assistants that give me no assistance." The next year he says "I am cruelly engaged, and like to be. . . I never leave till four, and do not keep a holiday now once in ten times, where I used to keep all red-letter days, and some five days besides, which I used to dub nature's holidays. I have had my day. I had formerly little to do. So of the little that is left of life, I may reckon two-thirds as dead, for the time that a man may call his own is his life; and hard work and thinking about it taint even the leisure hours. . . . Earthquakes swallow up this mercantile city and

its 'gripple merchants,' as Drayton hath it, 'born to be the curse of this brave isle!' I invoke this . . . because I am not fit for an office." Then, writing to Mrs. Wordsworth, he speaks of a man whom he said he had instinctively shrunk from, because he believed him to be the head of an office. "I hate all such people,—accountants, deputy-accountants. The dear abstract notion of the East India Company, as long as she is unseen, is pretty, rather poetical; but, as she makes herself manifest by the persons of such beasts, I loathe and detest her as the scarlet what-do-you-call-her of Babylon." In the spring of the following year (1809) he writes to Manning, "Next Monday is Whit Monday. What a reflexion. Twelve years ago, and I should have kept that and the following holiday in the fields a Maying. All those pretty pastoral delights are over. This dead, everlasting dead desk,—how it weighs the spirit of a gentleman down! This dead wood of a desk, instead of your living trees!" "Hang 'em!" he writes to Coleridge, "My brain, skin, flesh, bone, carcase, soul, time is all theirs." Three years after this the burden of his employment is complained of in deeper tones. "I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. You don't know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls, without relief, day after day, all the golden hours between ten and four, without interposition. *Taedet me harum quotidianarum formarum*, these pestilential clerk faces always in one's dish. Oh for a few years between the grave and the desk. . . . I dare not whisper to myself a pension on this

side of absolute incapacitation and infirmity, till years have sucked me dry. I had thought in a green old age to have retired to Ponder's End . . . toddling about between it and Cheshunt. . . . The hope is gone. I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing) with my breast against this thorn of a desk, with the only hope that some pulmonary affection may relieve me." To Bernard Barton —who like Lamb was employed at desk-work in a banking office—he makes the same complaints. But here he spoke to ears keenly alive to the disadvantages of the position, and in some measure blinded by poetic enthusiasm against the advantages which in worldly matters the desk secured. Barton wished to have his time to himself, in order to follow out literary ideas, and in one of his letters to Lamb he had expressed a wish to free himself from the desk, and trust to the support of his pen. In Lamb's answer, we see how keen worldly sense was always present to correct any overcharged fancy, and bring the unsubstantial back to earth. All his complaint and longing to be rid of his official drudgery vanishes in a moment, when the expression of it might have wrought serious mischief on the prospects of his friend. He seems hitherto to have been sporting with temporary feelings, and expending the fretfulness created by an aching head or a deranged digestion, on the first object of annoyance that presented itself. "Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support, beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you! Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you had but five consolatory minutes

between the desk and the bed, make much of them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. . . . Keep to your bank, and your bank will keep you. Trust not to the public; you may hang, starve, drown yourself, for anything that worthy personage cares. I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. . . . Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment; look upon them as lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of a desk, that makes me live. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen, but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close, but unharrassing way of life." When this was written, the day that Lamb had so often in his half earnest way asked for and despaired of was approaching. In 1825 he reached the age of fifty, and some dim intimations had been made him, that the Directors were not unwilling to entertain his desire for release, should he apply for it in a formal way. In March he writes to Barton thus :—"I am sick of hope deferred. The grand wheel is in agitation, that is to turn up my fortune, but round it rolls, and will turn up nothing. I have a glimpse of freedom, of becoming a gentleman at large; but I am put off from day to day. I have offered my resignation, and it is neither accepted nor rejected. . . . I am not conscious of the existence of friends, present or absent." The doubt and fear were over a few days after this was written. He gives Wordsworth the account of his good fortune in the following passages :—"Here am I then, after thirty-three years' slavery, sitting

in my own room at eleven o'clock this finest of all April mornings, a freed man, with £441 a year for the remainder of my life. . . . I came home for ever on Tuesday in last week. The incomprehensibleness of my condition overwhelmed me. It was like passing from life to eternity. . . . I wandered about thinking I was happy, but feeling I was not. . . . Now when all is holiday there are no holidays." This event, like some others in his life, Lamb made the subject of one of his Essays. The Superannuated Man is the more valuable for being thus a picture sketched from reality. But as we go on, side by side with him, and year by year, we see that the happiness that appeared in the distance to be hedged round with desks and ledgers, was hardly more approachable when this blockade was removed. Uneasiness did not cease her importunities after she had been petted. There was still something wanting, which was felt the more keenly, since it was not known what it was. When it was tangible, it was relieved by railing; but who can rail against an unknown ill? The leisure he obtained did not become literary leisure; for he wrote less after his emancipation, when he had days and weeks on hand, than he did when he could only snatch literary moments in the intervals of business, and among the pestering of friends. He was productive when he had little time, and barren when he had much. His one talent was more fruitful than ten talents. He seemed only to take up his pen at some temporary and often trumpery request. Some of his most tiresome and successful stimulators to work were ladies. At that time an album was as indispensible to a young lady as a necklace or a brooch.

She plied all her acquaintance for contributions, and if she could wheedle a veteran writer out of a poem or a riddle, it was almost as highly valued as a conquest over a rival in love. Lamb was good-natured, compliant, and therefore a victim. For eight years after his freedom, he wrote scarcely anything except for these literary pests; and album verses, and acrostics were the chief fruits which unlimited literary leisure produced. It was not that the rich vein of his humour was exhausted; for, in his correspondence, it was poured forth in all its original abundance. But there were two things absolutely necessary to set Lamb's pen a moving. He required some tie, or obligation, some contract to awaken his desire to write; and then, for a subject, he required some reality to set it off. A slight matter was enough. When once the microscopic fact started up, the pen would immediately expand it in all directions, and set wonder agog over it. But he was not like authors who have made writing their business, and are obliged to cover paper from an empty, as well as from a full mind. It was come day, go day with his life; and whether his pen moved or stood still was indifferent to his daily bread. It is this daily bread literature that is our bane. It crams the market with commodity almost as perishable as the gay and sweet-smelling offerings of Covent Garden. That which was bought at a high price to-day is in the kennel to-morrow. But perhaps it is best so. The thoroughly prized and permanent production is only so from its scarcity.

When Lamb's release left him free to choose a new residence wherever he liked, he was living at Islington, and

he continued to live there during four succeeding years. But Islington is in London, and though not so convenient for visitors as the Temple or Covent Garden, it was too convenient for the health of Miss Lamb, and the excitable propensities of her brother. They varied their life by sometimes retiring from company to Enfield; and as these occasional retirements acted beneficially both on brother and sister, it was in 1829 determined to settle at Enfield. This was a wrench for Lamb. It was the first time he had cast off London entirely; and though he found himself in the paradise of rural poets—with farms, hay-stacks, lanes, meadows, and altogether, as he used to say, a country as good as Westmoreland, yet, as he writes in a subsequent letter to Barton, "Let me congratulate you on the spring coming in, and do you in return condole with me on the winter going out. I dread the prospect of summer, with all his all-day-long days. No need of his assistance to make country places dull. With fire and candle-light, I can dream myself in Holborn. With lightsome skies, shining in to bed-time, I cannot. This Meshek, and these tents of Kedar—I would dwell in the skirts of Jerico rather, and think every blast of the coming in mail a ram's horn. Give me old London at fire and plague time, rather than these tepid gales, healthy country air, and purposeless exercise." Yet London itself was turning its back on him. He expresses this sensitively, after a visit to it in the same year that he removed to Enfield. "When I took leave of our young friend at Charing Cross 'twas heavy unfeeling rain, and I had nowhere to go. Home have I none, and not a sympa-

thizing house to turn to in the great city. . . . Yet I tried ten days at a sort of a friend's house . . . and got home on Thursday, convinced that I was better to get home to my hole at Enfield, and hide like a sick cat in my corner. And to make me more alone, our ill-tempered maid is gone; who, with all her airs, was yet a home-piece of furniture, a record of better days. The young thing that has succeeded her is good and attentive, but she is nothing. . . Scolding and quarrelling have something of familiarity and a community of interest; they imply acquaintance; they are of resentment, which is of the family of dearness. I can neither scold nor quarrel at this insignificant implement of household services; she is less than a cat, and just better than a deal dresser. What I can do and do over-do is to walk; but deadly long are the days, these summer all-day days, with but half-an-hour's candle-light, and no fire-light." And then at last he turns to the moral of the aspirations that beckoned him for ten years with a variety of seducing shadows. Barton, to whom he is writing, had been complaining of over work. "I pity you for over work, but, I assure you, no work is worse. The mind preys on itself, the most unwholesome food. I bragged formerly that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit. With few years to come, the days are wearisome. But weariness is not eternal. . . I have killed an hour or two in this poor scrawl. I am a sanguinary murderer of time, and would kill him inch-meal just now." But like a sick man, who cannot find ease in any position, and continually shifts from side to side, Lamb had tried a change of situation; but finding that

still irksome, now shifted from a house occupier to a lodger. "After sad spirits," he writes to Wordsworth in 1830, "prolonged through many of its months, [the last year] we have cast our skins; have taken a farewell of the pompous, troublesome trifle called housekeeping, and are settled down into poor boarders and lodgers. . . . Here we have nothing to do with our victuals, but to eat them; with the garden, but to see it grow; with the tax-gatherer, but to hear him knock; with the maid, but to hear her scolded. . . . Yet, in the self-condemned obliviousness, in the stagnation, some molesting yearnings of life, not quite killed, rise, prompting me that there was a London, and that I was of that old Jerusalem. In dreams I am in Fleet market, but I wake and cry to sleep again. I die hard, a stubborn Eloisa in this detestable Paraclete. What have I gained by health? Intollerable dullness. . . . O never let the lying poets be believed, who 'tice men from the cheerful haunts of streets, or think they mean it not of a country village. In the ruins of Palmyra, I could gird myself up to solitude, or muse to the snorings of the Seven Sleepers; but to have a little teazing image of a town about one; country folks that do not look like country folks; shops two yards square, half a dozen apples and two penn'orth of overlooked ginger-bread for the lofty fruiterers of Oxford Street." This was followed by another trial of London. Lamb took lodgings in Southampton Buildings, one of his old localities. But the experiment did not answer. The illness of his sister ensued, and he again returned to Enfield. His last residence was Edmonton. He moved thither in 1833. In

the middle of the following year, he received one of the severest losses he could receive in the death of Coleridge; for though the health of Coleridge had prevented many meetings for some time before he died, yet the very idea of Coleridge being dead seemed to occur like returning fits, and he was often heard to murmur to himself 'Coleridge is dead.' In less than half a year Lamb followed him. Coleridge died in July. In the latter part of December Lamb was taking his daily morning walk on the London road, when his foot caught against a stone. He fell, and bruised his face. The hurt seemed slight, and was apparently healing; when erysipelas set in; and, in a few days, he expired. He was in his sixtieth year.

There was one work which employed Lamb during the first flush of his liberty, and while the habit of effort was still strong on him, that remains to be noticed. He took the Confidant of Crabbe for a subject, and dramatised it. It is only in two acts, and though it was never produced, we are not sure that it does not display a larger fund of stage capability than either of the pieces he professedly wrote for the theatre. The tale is one of the most remarkable of Crabbe's writings. It is founded on the seduction of the wife of a yeoman, before her marriage. This unfortunate circumstance is unknown to her husband; but known to a female intimate, who uses the value of this secret to torture and prey upon the woman who has become her supporter. Lamb has perhaps erred in altering the chief source of the action of the piece. Crabbe has, we think, wisely placed it in the actual degradation of the wife before marriage, Lamb in merely a pre-contract. The

first being unknown to her husband, is really a sufficient cause for the terror of the wife, lest it be revealed to him, and for the consequent tyranny which the one confidant, who knows of it, exercises over her victim. But a betrothal has not this power. Husbands may be very jealous when their wives' virtues are in danger; but they generally care little whether they have given up a former suitor to take them, if anything, they are rather flattered by it. In other respects, this piece shows what an advantage it was to Lamb to have his incidents ready at hand, and how grandly he might have written on dramatic subjects, had he possessed the art of settling his idealities in fortunate situations. Even the alteration he has made in the wife's trial shows his defect in this quality. He has manifestly materially weakened the piece by it,—nay almost made it silly.

And there is another literary treasure that we have received from him, which claims a share in the reputation of Elia. His correspondence is often but the rough drafts of those transcendent essays. It has often the same richness, humor, ease, seriousness. It has a beautiful waywardness, that is continually slipping out the mind and the intellect. It is never formal and preconcerted, like the letters of Pope and Horace Walpole, and Madam de Sevigne and Lady Wortley Montague, but slips on without effort, and, in fact, talks to you face to face. Cowper's letters are in some respects of the same kind, but the humor of Cowper was always bound over to keep the peace,—he never went above or beyond well-defined limits, and he often impresses his reader with some of his own

serious, unnecessary discomfort. Lamb never does so. He is sometimes serious enough; but the suppression of gaiety ably provides for its accumulation. It always has its share of joke and pleasantry at last. The sentimental had only a plot of Lamb's face. The chief part of that domain belonged to mirth and sagacity—we might say wisdom. When we read such letters as those of Walpole or Pope, we find set thoughts in set phraseology to whomsoever written. They formally address them to Lady Mary, or Horace Mann; but they are really addressed to posterity. Pope was as particular in polishing a sentence in a letter, as he was in polishing a couplet in his Prologue to the Satires. The thought never strays out of him in its natural loose attire. It is always washed, and dandled, like the young heir of a family setting up for gentility. Horace Walpole was scarcely less finical. He conceived an idea of the necessity of correspondence different from that of Pope, and he followed out his conception. This was, that it should be easy, gossippy, garrulous;—that it should run on glibly, and reflect the lazy indifferencc of the mind, rather than its serious cravings. All this is done, and well done in Walpole. But though the theory has interdicted art, art is nowhere more apparent than in Walpole. The ease is taken pains with, the gossip is touched and Walpolised, the garrulity is thrown into chosen words, that take away all its insipidity. All this is not censurable, but laudable. It is much better to have such a body of well mixed correspondence, than the general stuff which goes under that name, and which has crowded hundred of volumes with trash during the last sixty years.

But Lamb, without any of the carefulness of Pope or Walpole, has, in his best letters, done better than either. He is not so equable as Walpole; for sometimes he is merely a verbal critic, suggesting a new word or a new line in compositions we care nothing about. But he has a quality which is wanting by necessity in writers, who divide their attention between their correspondents and posterity, and give their ideas to the one, and the setting of their ideas to the other. Lamb's manner varies with the person he addresses. He is serious, critical, confessional, deferential according to his correspondents. Then he is despondent, querulous, fictious according to himself. But, with all these differences, he mingles the central element of his genius, humor. And sometimes humor flows on without any alloy, brandishing its wooden sword and its blunt dagger at the follies of mankind. And sometimes with inimitable power it hits off a character, by noting its trivial and fainter lines, where it almost vanishes into commonplace, but not sufficiently so to be obscure.

On a visit to his friend Lloyd, in 1799, who was then at Cambridge, Lamb was introduced to a mathematical tutor there, Mr. Thomas Manning. They appear to have met together at some of those hearty college parties, which leave their flavor in the mind for ever. They are the freest meetings in life—no formalities, no restraints but the wholesome ones of good sense and hearty enjoyment, where that quality is not quite obliterate. Here Lamb was in his element. Manning appears to have been an exquisite mimic, and the most engaging personage among many. Lamb was so pleased with him, that he asked him

to remember him now and then with a letter,—a hint which opened up the most joyously frolicsome correspondence in our literature. Taken altogether, we have no such madcap and sportive epistles—so rich in wild, happy, humorous delineation as these letters to Manning. Lamb was perhaps more unrestrained to him than to Coleridge, after the first chill of growing friendship was removed. Though Manning was a mathematician, and Lamb had no more of that subtle science than sufficed to adjust the balances of his day-books; yet the very polar oppositions of their tastes and studies seemed to draw them together, and Manning soon became almost a necessity to Lamb. He wrote to him of his house-changes, his excursions, his travels, his literary doings, and literary projects, and their results. A year or two after they became acquainted, Manning began to talk of visiting China. He did not carry it out until 1806, when he went to the celestial kingdom, and was absent about a dozen years. When he was still hesitating, Lamb wrote to him in the following gay humor:—"My dear friend, think what a sad pity it would be to bury such parts in heathen countries, among nasty, unconversable, horse-belching, Tartar people. Some say they are cannibals; and then conceive a Tartar fellow eating my friend, and adding the cool malignity of mustard and vinegar! I am afraid 'tis the reading of Chaucer has misled you; his foolish stories about Cambuscan, and the ring, and the horse of brass. Believe me there are no such things, 'tis all the poet's invention. . . . Read no books of voyages (they are nothing but lies), only now and then a romance to keep the fancy under." In 1806,

Lamb had to shake hands with him on his departure, and felt, he says, "just like having shaken hands with a wretch on the fatal scaffold." He had been away nine years; when, on Christmas day, 1815, Lamb wrote to him one of the most original specimens of his delightful genius. "This is Christmas day, 1815, with us; what it may be with you I don't know, the 12th June next year perhaps; and if it should be the consecrated season with you, I don't know how you can keep it. You have no turkeys; you would not desecrate the festival by offering up a withered Chinese bantam instead of the savory grand norfolcian holocaust, that smokes all round my nostrils at this moment from a thousand fire-sides. . . . I feel, I feel my bowels refreshed with the holy tide. My zeal is great against the unedified heathen. Down with the Pagodas—down with the idols—Ching-chong-fo—and his foolish priesthood! Come out of Babylon, oh my friend! for her time is come, and the child that is native, and the Proselyte of her gates shall kindle and smoke together! And in sober sense what makes you so long from among us, Manning? You must not expect to see the same England again which you left. Empires have been overturned, crowns trodden into dust, the face of the western world quite changed. Your friends have all got old—those you left blooming. . . . Scarce here and there one will be able to make out your face; all your opinions will be out of date, your jokes obsolete, your puns rejected with fastidiousness, as the wit of the last age. Your way of mathematics has already given way to a new method." In this way he runs on, with a slight flavor of satire and

seriousness oozing out of this unbounded falsehood,—but it is a falsehood; which if true, would be terribly pathetic, and all it needs to make it true is but a few more revolutions of the sun. It was then pleasant banter, it is now in a great measure serious fact. So nearly are our smiles akin to our tears.

Lamb showed in his Elia, that although a light frost of satire covered some of his allusions, he had a sincere respect for the Quakers, and even sympathized with those parts of their system which, in the mutable fashions of the world, seem absurd. This was only another symptom of that taste, which eschewed the violent and loud in everything,—in poetry, in politics, in religion, in debate, in character. But though Lamb's Quaker inclinations went as far as one apart from the Society can go and keep apart; yet he had not hesitated to show, that their cool regard for right might sometimes run into the meshes of dishonesty. The anecdote was told in *Imperfect Sympathies*, and called up a remonstrance from Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet. This led to a correspondence; which, in the latter part of Lamb's life, became quite characteristic. By far the greater number of published letters after 1822 are to Bernard Barton. In these mirth, complaint, advice, and criticism are blended. They are not so high-spirited as those to Manning, but they are always brightened with gleams of that ever-present gaiety, that never allowed the worst aspects of life to continue long in their state of torment. The execution of Fauntelroy, in 1824, for forgery, led him into the following strain. He had been telling Barton what an excitement it would

create if a Quaker were to be hanged. "I tremble, I am sure, at myself, when I think that so many poor victims of the law, at one time of their life, made as sure of never being hanged, as I, in my presumption, am too ready to do myself. What are we better than they? Do we come into the world with different necks? Is there any distinctive mark under our left ears? Are we unstrangulable, I ask you? Think of these things. I am shocked sometimes at the shape of my own fingers, not for their resemblance to the ape tribe (which is something), but for the exquisite adaptation of them to the purposes of picking, fingering, &c."

If we were to select from the whole body of English correspondence a letter that contained the greatest quantity of rare intellectual power, we should select the following, addressed to Mr. Dyer. It relates to the Swing fires, when during the first reform agitation, in 1831, the corn-stacks, from one end of the country to the other, were fired by rustics, as was supposed, who resorted to this desperate method of enlightening their masters on the necessity for reform. "Poor Enfield, that has been so peaceable hitherto, has caught the inflammatory fever; the tokens are upon her; and a great fire was blazing last night in the barns and haystacks of a farmer about half a mile from us. Where will these things end? There is no doubt of its being the work of some ill-disposed rustic, but how is he to be discovered? They go to work in the dark with strange chemical preparations, unknown to our forefathers. There is not even a dark lantern, to have a chance of detecting these Guy Fauxes. We are past the iron age,

and are got into the fiery age, undreamed of by Ovid. You are lucky in Clifford's Inn, where I think you have few ricks or stacks worth the burning. Pray keep as little corn as you can for fear of the worst. It was never good times in England since the poor began to speculate on their condition. Formerly they jogged on with as little reflection as horses. The whistling ploughman went cheek by joul with his brother that neighed. Now the biped carries a box of phosphorus in his leather breeches, and in the dead of night the half-illuminated beast steals his magic potion into a cleft in a barn, and half the country is grinning with new fires. Farmer Greystock said something to the touchy rustic that he did not relish, and he writes his distaste in flames. What a power to intoxicate his crude brains, muddlingly alive to perceive that something is wrong in the social system,—what a hellish faculty above gunpowder! Now rich and poor are fairly pitted. We shall see who can hang or burn fastest. It is not always revenge that stimulates these kindlings. There is a love of exciting mischief. Think of a disrespected clod, that was trod into earth; that was nothing; on a sudden by damned arts refined into an exterminating angel, devouring the fruits of the earth and their growers in a mass of fire! What a new existence! What a temptation above Lucifer's! Would clod be anything but a clod, if he could resist it? Why, here was a spectacle last night for a whole country, a bonfire visible to London, alarming her guilty towers, and shaking the monument with an ague fit, all done by a little vial of phosphor in a clown's fob. How he must grin, and shake his empty

noddle in clouds! The Vulcanian epicure! Alas, can we ring the bells backwards? Can we unlearn the arts that pretend to civilize, and then burn the world? There is a march of science, but who shall beat the drums for its retreat? Who shall persuade the boor that phosphor will not ignite? Seven goodly stacks of hay, with corn-barns proportionable, lie smoking ashes and chaff, which man and beast would sputter out and reject like those apples of asphaltes and bitumen. The food for the inhabitants of the earth will quickly disappear. Hot rolls may say, '*Fuimus panes, fuit quartern loaf, et ingens gloria apple-pasty-orum.*' That the good old munching system may last thy time and mine, good un-incendiary George, is the devout prayer of thine, to the last crust, C. Lamb." There is no essay in Bacon equal to this. Not one so full of that deep philosophy, which is his excellence. Not one so crammed with melancholy, but profound wisdom. And yet it is not without its liveliness. There are sparkles in in the midst of its gloom like diamonds on crape.

During Lamb's best days, when he resided in the Temple and in Russell Street, he entered into a kind of compact with his closest friends, that, instead of straying on him at all kinds of accidental times and hours, they should rally round him in a body on Wednesday evenings. It was then that such men as Hazlitt, Hunt, Godwin, Talfourd, occasionally Coleridge, Barry Cornwall, Basil Montague, George Dyer; sometimes Liston or Munden might be met, with men of less note, who were not unnecessary supplements to their distinguished companions. It was here that discussions on themes generally literary

were carried on with an expansiveness and acuteness, that has often made their hearers wish they could have been transferred to paper by means of those potent magicians, who fill the pages of the *Times* with the dullness of country squires, and half-made politicians. But the most part of these debates has vanished, like the monologues of Coleridge, and like them they have had their effect, though the effect is altogether undetected. The room, as well as the company, in which these unions took place, has had its chronicler; and we can easily picture a moderate sized apartment, fitted to accommodate a dozen persons, its low ceiling somewhat stained with tobacco smoke, with plain furniture, and the walls hung with the half dozen prints of the *Marriage a la mode* of Hogarth, and some others; among which, in plain black frames, were one by Leonardo la Vinci; and another, we almost think the Bacchus and Ariadne of Titian. At one, and sometimes two tables sat one or two whist parties, eager as Mrs. Battle in the game; and Lamb himself was generally foremost in the conflict of clubs and spades. On a side table, a cold joint or two was set out, flanked with roasted potatoes, and a foaming jug of porter. Discussion went on here alongside the games, and it only occasionally broke through the skirmish of retort and epigram into a serious battle of intellect. It was then that each one displayed his peculiar excellence;—Lamb in condensing a wandering argument by means of turning its wings upon its centre;—Hazlitt in throwing into it the fire either of illumination or annihilation;—Hunt by a genial interpretation, which gave grace to what it had often little power to overrule;—and, if

Coleridge were present, all would, for half an hour, suspend their eagerness to follow the subject as it struck out a wisp of light among the flats of German philosophy. Hazlitt has recorded the discussion of one evening, when he was present. His account, which is rather long, is interesting for opening out the subject pretty much as it occurred, and giving us a specimen of the most flighty of intellectual revelations. Briefly it was as follows:—Lamb had started the question;—who are the persons one would wish to have seen? Ayrton, one of the guests, immediately suggested Newton and Locke. Lamb's face betrayed impatience and courtesy as he stammered 'Yes, the greatest names, but they were not persons,—not persons.' Ayrton was astonished at this, and Lamb continued 'not characters. Locke is the Essay, Newton the Principia, we want to see one *bodily*, when there is something peculiar in the individual more than we can learn from his writings. Locke and Newton are very like Kneller's portraits; but who could paint Shakspere?' 'Then,' said Ayrton, 'you would prefer Shakspere and Milton.' 'No,' returned Lamb, 'I have seen so much of Shakspere on the stage, and on book-stalls, and in frontispieces; and Milton's face, as it has come down to us, I do not like. It is too stiff, too puritanic. I should lose the manna of his poetry in the leaven of his countenance.' Here Ayrton gave up, and said he would guess no more. Lamb then named Sir Thomas Browne and Fulke Greville as the men whom he would prefer to see. At this Ayrton laughed, and thought Lamb was at one of his usual jests. But other parts of the company knew their host better.

They saw that he was serious, and when no one joined Ayrton in his mirth, he thought there might be something in the choice. Then Lamb explained that why he named them was that they were mysteries, and resembled sooth-sayers, who dealt in hints and oracles, and that he would like to question them on the meaning of their sayings. He felt, he said, no curiosity after Dr. Johnson; as, by means of Boswell, we had the mind of the positive moralist quite opened out to us. But he would disturb the repose of the implicit, the inextricable, the inscrutable. 'When I look,' continued Lamb, 'at that obscure but gorgeous prose composition, the Urn Burial, I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure; or it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author, to lead me through it. Besides, who would not be curious to see the lineaments of a man, who, having himself been twice married, wished that mankind were propagated like trees. As to Fulke Greville, he is like nothing but one of his own Prologues, spoken by the ghost of an old king of Ormus—a truly formidable and inviting personage. His style is apocalyptical, cabalistical, a knot worthy of such an apparition to untie.' Donne was then mentioned as another writer of mysteries, and the book was handed down and passages read in proof. On Chaucer being named, Ayrton dissented on account of his rugged metre, and quaint phraseology. However, most of the company expressed a desire to see the old father, and Hazlitt especially vindicated the author of the Canterbury Tales, and placed him beside Boccacio. He then turned to

Dante, who, he said, 'is as interesting a person as his own Ugolino, one whose lineaments curiosity would as eagerly devour, in order to penetrate his spirit, and he is the only one of the Italian poets I should care much to see.' Lamb asked him, if he would not desire to see Spenser, as well as Chaucer. Hazlitt replied 'No, for his beauties are ideal, visionary; not palpable or personal, and therefore connected with less curiosity about the man. His poetry is the essence of romance, a halo round the orb of fancy, and the individual might destroy the charm. No tones of voice can come up to the cadence of his verse, no form but a winged angel vie with the airy shapes he described.' Captain Burney then suggested Columbus, and Martin Burney hinted at the Wandering Jew. But Columbus was handed over to the Americans, and the Jew rejected as spurious. Mrs. Reynolds asked for Pope chatting with Patty Blount. When Lamb acquiesced, Ayrton said that he thought he of the lake school did not like Pope. Lamb said he could read him over for ever. Ayrton said that the Essay on Man is a masterpiece. 'I seldom look at it,' returned Lamb. 'Then you admire the Satires,' continued Ayrton. 'No, not the Satires,' returned Lamb, 'but his friendly epistles and compliments.' Ayrton said, 'I did not know he ever made any compliments.' 'Oh yes,' said Lamb, 'the finest ever paid by the wit of man,—each worth an estate for life,—nay each is an immortality.' Dryden was rejected because he made a show of himself, and sat in a coffee house to be seen. Pope reached the ideal of a poet's life; for he not only lived to obtain his fame, but his fame made him rewarded, as the world rates reward. Junius,

Fielding, Richardson, Cromwell, Bunyan, Garrick, Webster and others were canvassed, and discriminating opinions passed on them; when Lamb asked Hazlitt if he would wish to see any one who had been hanged. Hazlitt said Eugene Aram. The admirable Crichton was named, at which a Scotchman present was highly delighted, and said he was descended from him, and had family plate in his possession as vouchers for the fact, which were inscribed A. C. At this innocent conceit, Leigh Hunt roared with laughter. Then an array of metaphysicians and painters followed, with such famous obscures as the Duchess of Newcastle—Lamb's favorite; Mrs. Hutchinson, Ninon de l' Enclos.

Don Quixote being proposed, Hunt objected to heroes, aud continued, 'What say you Mr. Lamb? Are you for eking out your shadowy list with such names as Alexander, Tamerlane, Ghengis Khan?' 'Excuse me,' said Lamb, 'on the subject of characters in active life, plotters, and disturbers of the world, I have a crotchet of my own, which I beg leave to reserve.' 'No, no, come out with your worthies,' interposed several voices.' 'Then what do you think of Judas Iscariot and Guy Fawkes;' and when called on to give his reason, Lamb replied that he thought Guy was ill-used, and as to Judas Iscariot, 'I would fain see the face of him; who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the son of man, could afterwards betray him. I have no conception of such a thing, nor have I ever seen any picture—not even Leonardo's very fine one—that gave me the least idea of it. There is only one other person I can ever think of after this,' proceeded

Lamb, but without mentioning a name, 'that once put on the semblance of mortality. If Shakspere were to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but, if that person were to come into it, we should all fall down, and try to kiss the hem of his garment.' Such is the outline of one Wednesday night's discussion. But we must hasten to our conclusion.

Sydney Smith, Rogers, Moore, Theodore Hook, and Lamb all belonging to the same period, were all variously celebrated for their striking sayings and replies. It would scarcely be presenting Lamb under all his prominent aspects to omit this descriptive singularity; though it generally happens that retorts, which were felt to be brilliant when delivered with the heat of an argument warm in every mind around, or when gaiety was relaxing the spirits of all, are comparatively dull when they have to prepare their own way to appreciation. Few jokes can bear the cold; and many of Lamb's derived so much of their life from the accidents among which they were brought forth, that those who heard them from the speaker's mouth agree that it is impossible to give anything but a vague notion of their spirit by relating them. This description does not apply to all. Many still retain much of the spirit that produced them, and are remarkable for an entire absence of ill-nature. We have already proceeded to such a length that we can only select a few. But as this is the part of Lamb's history which is most generally known, there is less need to do any more than just indicate their nature, which generally turned on a pun when it was not based on humor.

One evening, when the whole nation was divided on the subject of Queen Caroline, and her trial was going on, the conversation turned on the evidence against her, especially that of Majocchi. Lamb said he would like to see the Italian witnesses, he would ask them to supper. Talfourd said, 'You would not sit with them.' 'Yes,' said Lamb, 'I would sit with anything but a hen or a tailor.'

One night Lamb wanted to demonstrate that the Man-t-chou Tartars were Cannibals, and that the Chinese were identical with the Cel-tes (Sell Teas).

Edward Irving and Lamb had once been listening to an oration of Coleridge. The divine naturally wished to be made clearer on some of Coleridge's points, or to dispute them altogether; but found it hopeless to attempt to wedge in a word. He left with Lamb, half hipped at the everlasting stream of words he had been listening to, and asked his companion if he could ever get in a word with Coleridge. 'N—n—no,' said Lamb, stuttering, 'I never wish.' 'Why perhaps it is better not,' said the divine.

Martin Burney was one evening describing the three kinds of acids; when Lamb interrupting said, 'The best kind of acid, however, you know, Martin, is assid-uity.'

Lamb himself has told the following anecdote:—"We travelled with one of those troublesome fellow passengers in a stage coach, that is called a well-informed man. For twenty miles we discoursed about the properties of steam, probabilities of carriages by ditto, till all my science, and more than all, was exhausted, and I was thinking of escaping my torment by getting up on the outside; when,

getting into Bishop's Stortford my gentleman, spying some farming land, put an unlucky question to me, what sort of a crop of turnips I thought we should have this year? Emma's eyes turned on me to know what in the world I could have to say; and she burst into a violent fit of laughter, when with the greatest gravity I replied that 'it depended, I believed, upon boiled legs of mutton.' This clenched our conversation."

"An old woman begged of me for charity. 'Ah sir,' said she, 'I have seen better days.' 'So have I good woman,' I replied, glancing at the clouds, which were raining hard at the time."

Martin Burney was one night playing at whist, with hands by no means so flesh-colored as they ought to have been. 'If dirt were trumps, Martin,' said Lamb, 'what hands you would hold.'

Coleridge was one evening pouring forth his stream of words, and running before the wind, catching every side subject as he went, when he veered round and turned on Shrewsbury. 'There,' he said, 'I was accustomed to preach, and, by the by, Charles, you never heard me preach, did you?' 'I—I—never heard you do anything else,' returned Lamb, stammering over the words.

Lamb, like most men of genius, was undersized. Moreover, his undersized frame was slimly built, with legs thin and wasted, and arms that hung loosely in their sleeves. But the head, which crowned this feeble body, had accepted none of its denials. It was bold and capacious enough to hold the matter of a Hamlet or the

Canterbury Tales. His eyes were slightly brown, and twinkling with something of wildness or anxiety in them, as if some fright had just passed over the features—something that you would not be disappointed if it occurred in one whose intellects were unsettled. The portraits of him convey this impression. His forehead was a noble portal, worthy of the mansion it fronted. His hair was crispy black; and around a small mouth, closed by thin nervous lips, a number of lines and furrows threw up the cheek bones, and indicated to what a depth the miseries of life had ploughed. Yet, about these lines, shading and mitigating their force, pliant curves of humor and almost laughter spread, breaking up the hard lines of sorrow, and mingling them with tracings of pleasure and tranquil thought. When these interesting features were lighted up by one of Lamb's smiles, the impression is said to have been exceedingly sweet, sweeter some of his friends say than they ever witnessed on any other face. In dress Lamb was invariable. He always wore black, with black gaiters. He carried a snuff-box, but we are not told that he was at all immoderate in the use of it.

The character of Lamb had nothing in it intricate or puzzling. It was a clear and pleasant union of many points that we admire, with few that even the severest moralist has passed a very hard sentence upon. Amiable was not the word to describe that which could sometimes be sharp and ruffled; nor would variable suit one, who, although he might not be always alike, yet never departed so widely from the standard he had set up, as to lose sight of it; nor was fluctuating much more appropriate,

for no one who knew him ever had any doubt of the general nature of the reception he would receive from him. He was especially qualified for bringing men together; and though he had perhaps few qualities intense enough to command them, yet he had plenty of that kind of fascination which makes men think well of one another, which reconciles them to themselves, which tosses temper to the winds, and draws out of those with whom it is associated humors, fancies, and all those playful nothings, which, nothings as they are, have often more effect on our disposition than the heaviest substantialities. This docile and pliant nature naturally drew around him not only many persons but many characters. Indeed there is scarcely any single literary man of his generation with whom so many notable and celebrated men were connected; and certainly no one with whom such a variety of opinion, taste, and creed were brought under one roof. Godwin, the advocate of an extravagant theory which he called Political Justice; Holcroft, the free-thinking dramatist; Thelwell, the violent defender of the French Revolution; Hazlitt, the heady and eloquent; Leigh Hunt, the editor of the *Examiner*, represented radical opinion of five different dimensions. Yet all proceeded to lengths that would have made the followers of Bright and Ernest Jones hesitate. Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth were in the opposite scale;—they were earnest resisters of popular movements, and of concession to popular outcry;—they were determined supporters of the English church;—they all alike abhorred almost every principle, religious and political, which the five radicals we have selected professed. Then there was

Clarkson, the abolitionist, and Bernard Barton, Quakers; Carey, an Anglican clergyman, and the translator of Dante; Talfourd, a barrister, and Unitarian; Payne Collier; Manning, a University tutor; Barnes, the slashing editor of the *Times;* Sheridan Knowles, the dramatic poet; Tom Hood; Ainsworth, the novelist; Liston, the comedian; Baron Field, the judge; and others,—representing almost every walk in life, as well as every shade of opinion. Yet all these men were the friends of Lamb. All held him in the highest respect, visited him, ate with him, and were happy to listen to his opinions on men and things. And here, where we find the Atheist with the Puritan; the Barrister with the Comedian; the Quaker with the University don; the Church of England priest with the Socialist, there was no other motive for such harmony among animals of a hostile nature, than the open conciliating character of the central figure. When we consider the men and the age, the wonder that such a group of inconsistences could be harmlessly assimilated increases tenfold. It was as if the hyæna and the rabbit; the lioness and the goat; the tiger and the fawn were caged together. When these passionate natures were all slung, like beads round one neck, the hostility of party and sect was ten times more virulent than now. The anger which divided some of these celebrities from one another then, was such an anger as all the fury of the agitation and inflammatory eloquence of the last two years has been unable to arouse even in partisans. And all this heat was then glowing with its own fire. And sometimes this fire broke forth among the meeters in

Mitre Court, or Great Russell Street. But a timely pun, or lively uncovering of the humorous side of the dispute by Lamb, generally restored the balance, if it did not settle the debate. Holcroft, who was rampant in scepticism and everlasting in dispute, had one night got Coleridge over head and ears in the question: which is best—man as he is, or man as he is to be. Coleridge was soaring out of sight, and throwing as he went those magnificent fire-works, which often diverted the attention of the listener from the state of the argument. Holcroft, who had an extraordinary desire for definition and closeness, was unable or unwilling to follow the metaphysician in his sweeping wanderings, and wished to pin him close to common sense. Hazlitt was listening and saying nothing. The argument was getting angry; when Lamb, who had allowed the combatants to fight up to the verge of desperation, quieted the question altogether by interposing, "I care neither for man as he is, nor man as he is to be, give me man as he is *not* to be." A laugh followed, and harmony was restored.

Lamb has been reproached for being so passive under political fire; and Hazlitt, who felt nothing lukewarm where he felt at all, could not understand how any one, who sided with liberal opinions, could be dull and quiet when they were in danger, or forbear to strike right and left for proselytes. But Lamb, when he took a side, took it with the knowledge that there was a case for his antagonists as well as himself. He admitted rights; and though he might be confident, he did not blind himself to the contingency that confidence might be founded on imperfect

knowledge; and he therefore regarded the question as one widely apart from the tie of friendship, and the recreations of social life. Indeed politics were to Lamb almost as abstract as metaphysics, and he would as soon think of scouting a man for not admitting the reality of objects, as for denying the rights of Protestants to Catholics. Swedenborg's correspondences were quite as fit subjects, in Lamb's opinion, to grow angry over as reform in parliament, or reform in law. Indeed we doubt whether he saw any real distinction in the value of the questions. There often met at Lamb's rooms half a dozen men, which the government of the day would have rather got rid of, than have won the Battle of Waterloo. Yet their energy was vaporing to Lamb, or warmed him to nothing but a brisker repartee, or funnier comparison.

The anger and violence which political questions excited, was also a very great reason why Lamb had little sympathy with them. Whatever transported man out of the region of common sense, and turned his passions loose among his reason, was distasteful to Lamb. He denied the philosophies of selfishness. He had a constitutional dislike for all kinds of passion, and was opposed in a great measure, to sentiment of any kind. He never allowed himself to be carried away by his feelings. When they were getting the better of him, he calmly argued them back into experience. The heart had its full measure of authority in Lamb, but it was always kept to that measure; it never intruded on the province of the understanding. There was nothing of Sterne about him. Indeed, although we could scarcely think of two natures more unlike than

those of Swift and Lamb; yet, we think, Lamb would more easily have been turned into Swift, than into Sterne. An assumed character was far more averse from his nature than a natural character, though that character might be composed of hate, malignity, disgust, envy, and wretchedness. If any thing could have moved a mind, apathetic to affairs in general, to take a side, and become determined, it would have been such events as were stirring in the year 1800. The Italian campaign of Buonaparte was in every body's mouth; old soldiers hardly believed in its reality; and minds, that crave wonder, were almost paralyzed by their own chosen food. This astonishing military success was then being followed by another, that threatened England herself. The soldier, who by a kind of enchantment, had leaped the Alps, taken his foe in the rear, and swept Lombardy of Austrians, from the Gulf of Venice to the Gulf of Genoa, was now crossing the Mediterranean to intercept us on the way to India, and grasp the key of our noblest colony. Lamb was a clerk, whose interests were bound up with the interests of this colony. Yet, at the very time when Buonaparte had already landed, and had called upon the Pyramids to behold the victories of his army, Lamb says that "Public affairs—except as they touch upon me and so turn into private—I cannot whip up my mind to feel any interest in. . . I cannot make these present times present to me. I read histories of the past and live in them." Yet we seem now to think that the doings of that period, which Lamb treats so quietly, were thunder and lightinng to the gloomy twilight and monotonous murmurs among which he delighted to pore.

But this passage illustrates the texture of his mind. It did not like to grapple and wrestle with any thing. It was not eager for food seasoned with strong condiments. It avoided the present, in order to be free from its savage reality. It liked events from which the fangs had been drawn, and in which the poison bags were dried up. Lamb did not wish to be harrowed through any of his faculties except his imagination. It was this peculiarity which made him exclaim so eloquently against Lear on the stage. The Lear that he saw was incorporeal, and whenever it was attempted to make a real Lear of simulated feelings he was shocked. He had no delight in morbid taste of any kind. And, indeed, it was the very fineness of the quality of his mind, its ready reply to the merest touch, which thus led its possessor to shrink from agitation and passion. Where there is a dull understanding, and the intellectual powers are cold and feeble, it requires all the force of real events to stir up their lazy interests. That which is agony and a scalding of the brain to a sensitive mind, is only an agreeable pulsation to men in general. That which will prostrate a delicate organization, will only hasten the movement of the gross and heavy into healthy action. It was as characteristic of Goethe as of Lamb to avoid the political world around him. When Buonaparte overran the little state in which he dwelt, Goethe retired to his library, and studied Arabic. His German contemporaries, fuming with frenzy and tobacco, called him base, and the betrayer of his country. He knew them as well as he knew himself, and permitted them to relieve their excitement with windy words. The political

fever would have upset his mind, without moderating any of the disasters which were taking place. The delicacy of his intellect was so fine, that it was not only unequal to act the demagogue, and harangue ignorance on the side of its prejudices; but it could never bear to read of the murders and accidents of the day. Goethe studiously avoided all sensational narratives, whether real or unreal. Like Lamb, he found all the excitement he could bear in the past. These instances show that, it is not so much an act of the judgment, when a sensitive being refuses to suffer the interests of the day to carry him onward, as an act of self-preservation. He satisfies himself with events in which the passions are dried up, because his organization is too delicate to digest them in their coarse and raw condition.

It was, perhaps, a mere change of external appearance, in the same intellectual peculiarity, that made Lamb's mind seem, to common observers, an irreligious one;—that is, a mind that renounced all the forms and observances which are recognized as the 'outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.' It would be absurd to claim any thing like Methodism, or Calvinism, or even Anglicanism for Lamb. He neither went to church or chapel, or cherished in himself any principle that restricted the free play of his ideas. Indeed he was so entirely under the control of unrestrained feelings, that he never overcame the impulsiveness of a child in some things. In a letter to Southey, he says, "I am going to stand godfather; I don't like the business; I cannot muster up decorum for these occasions; I shall certainly disgrace the

font; I was at Hazlitt's marriage, and was like to have been turned out several times during the ceremony. Any thing awful makes me laugh. I misbehaved once at a funeral. Yet I can read about these ceremonies with pious and proper feelings. The realities of life only seem mockeries." Nine persons out of ten would consider such behaviour as Lamb here recounts of himself, as a sign of an utter deadness to all religious feeling. They would denounce the man who owned to it, as very far sunk in depravity. There is no part of our conduct which we hold so stiffly to a fixed and ceremonious uniformity, as our behaviour in connection with religious duties. It is even uncharitably construed against a child, when it does not behave with due respect in the house of prayer. No one can say that these rigours are improper, that it would be tolerable to allow the same license in the chapel as in the theatre, or to look on the ceremonies of the altar with the same thoughtlessness as we look on a panorama. Yet a casual observer would, in the case of Lamb, confound the two, and affirm that he had no more respect for a religious duty, than he had for a raree show;—that the acting of Munden was as serious a matter to him as the fate of the soul. But we see how, in this instance, that intellectual formation, which might be called a virtue when it was brought in contact with politics, assumed all the outward show of a vice, when it touched religion. It was not the absence of religion from his nature, but the incapacity to act a part where religion becomes an outward and visible sign. However unlike those ideas which we call religious may be hung together in different persons, there can be no

great difference on the solemnity of death. This is really the great apostle that brings the same creed to the convictions of all. There we all rally and unite together. Yet a funeral was to Lamb the same source of unceremoniousness as a wedding. There was in his mind such a filmy partition between its chambers, that the sublime and the ridiculous, always, as the proverb tells us, near neighbors, were often actual companions with Lamb. He who had tasted the bitterest concoction of the cup of life, was, perhaps, kindly saved from its severest punishment by the very levity, which took sadness out of sad things, and smiled when others were weeping. It was on one of these occasions, or on an occasion of some unseasonable license, that one of his correspondents appears to have remonstrated with him. Lamb replies, "Do not rashly infer from some slight and light expressions, which I may have made use of in a moment of levity, . . . that I am an inveterate enemy of all religion. I have had a time of seriousness, and I have known the importance and reality of a religious belief. Latterly much of my seriousness has gone off, whether from new company, or some other associations, but I still retain at bottom a conviction of the truth, and certainly of the usefulness of religion." Many of the companions that assembled at Lamb's were unbelievers, who exulted in their separation from the generality of their race. But Lamb drew back as coldly from discussion, when it began to meddle with religion, as he did when it began to be political. He had the same kind of distaste for one as the other, and both seemed to touch painfully on the same intellectual nerve, and he

often put both out of sight by the same means. A levity was as artfully applied to religious as to political disputants.

It is hardly possible to obtain a notion of men as they really were. Indeed we scarcely hazard anything when we say that no one has yet ever been represented otherwise than in some degree as a fictitious character, inasmuch as the impression that is received by the man himself can never be transmitted by words. The most minute portraits only approach the originals in different degrees. Johnson, in the pages of Boswell, is a character strongly and happily drawn. But Boswell, with all his industry directed to one object, has only given us a resemblance a little closer to the original than usual. The man Johnson, and the Boswellized Johnson, were individuals, with only some features in common. Nature works with tools too perfect and delicate to be imitated with such coarse specimens as the occasional words and doings of her subject. It is only the man himself that can be his own interpreter. Hence we perhaps know more of Montaigne than of any man that ever lived, excepting ourselves. Montaigne is the only man that has not been ashamed of his nature, and has dared to reveal himself in all his variableness and turning.

Some of Lamb's biographers and friends have said that the sole blot on his character was the propensity to drink. Either unfortunately or fortunately; for it would be difficult to determine the matter, Lamb could only take a very small quantity of intoxicating drink before it began to show a decided effect on him. His favorites were gin and porter,—beverages which have shared remarkably in

the rises and falls of London life. But a quantity of either, which would only rouse the latent action of common minds, took the reason out of Lamb. Yet, while he kept himself in the bounds which his weak digestion prescribed, the liquor improved his wit, developed his wisdom, and animated all around him with his subtle exhibition of the pleasant side of things. We are told that he generally knew when to stop, and his sister had a very beneficial influence over him at such times as he was inclined to transgress. Yet the cup often overflowed, and his strong sense of folly poured its rebuke upon him in the most acute forms afterwards. He made efforts now and then to deny himself altogether and live by theory. This, however, did not answer. His constitution, that refused to be over indulged without revenge, was impatient at no indulgence. He required stimulus to give freedom and ease to his thoughts. While he was over temperate, he was over moody. The mind brooded. The moderate inconveniences of life expanded into persecutions and misfortunes. Whereas a draught or two of porter would

> "Cleanse the stuffed bosom of the perilous stuff,
> That weighed upon the heart."

Patmore, one of the later of Lamb's friends, who has written with great good sense and penetration on him, says, "I have no recollection of any Table Talk which has left such delightful impressions on my mind, as that which has taken place between the first and last glass of humble gin and water, after a rump steak or pork chop supper, in the simple little domicile of Chas. Lamb and his sister, at Enfield Chase." In Lamb's humorous account of himself,

which he gave to Mr. Upcot, he confesses that he is "a small eater but not drinker, confesses a partiality for the production of the juniper berry, was a fierce smoker of tobacco, but may be resembled to a volcano burnt out, emitting only now and then a casual puff."

One of Lamb's Essays is entitled the Confessions of a Drunkard. This Essay presents a fearful picture of the effects of drink, and it was used against its author as a real experience, by the writers in the *Quarterly Review* and other publications, which took the *Quarterly* side in politics, and imitated it in malignity. But this accusation was on a par with most other political accusations of that day. There was only a brick of truth on which to build a whole edifice of slander. It was Lamb's failing sometimes, as we said, to overpass the line of prudence; but generally he only obeyed what in his case was the necessity of his nature. "Now you are not going to drink any ale, Charles," was Miss Lamb's parting salutation; when, as it frequently happened, he accompanied one of his visitors on his way back to London. "No, no," would be his half impatient reply; but a long walk, a wayside ale-house, and the prospect of a chatty half hour, were temptations that overcame all philosophy on the point, and a foaming cup of porter was soon produced in defiance of the half-extorted promise. But Lamb had read Thomas Aquinas, and he could ease his conscience in scholastic fashion, by declaring that porter is not ale. When the walk was renewed, Lamb reached his highest point of intellectual communication. He stammered out wisdom in Cap and Bells,—he became full of matter,—indeed often so brilliant in expo-

sition and analysis, that Patmore doubts whether we have received anything equal to the full richness of his mind; whether what we possess can be likened to anything but the spillings and waste of his intellect. This is, perhaps, over stated. That which is unequalled in its way, cannot be looked on as an unworthy representative of any mind. We doubt, indeed, whether the same thing has not been said of most men of genius, from Burns to Pascal.

There was that in Lamb which was seen very imperfectly in most of his friends and contemporaries. Even the most celebrated of those who used to assemble around him occasionally, and especially on his Wednesday evenings, possessed but a very imperfect, or very rude knowledge of human nature. Hazlitt looked on it as a serpent, that was only gradually ridding itself of its slough. Coleridge viewed it as a kind of oriental jin, prone to exercising its vast powers to the detriment of those subject to it; but capable of generosities and sympathies of an exalted kind. Hunt viewed it as a mule loaded with ingots, with a mixture of patience, that bore oppression to any extent, and stubbornness, that almost defied bit and bridle. Talfourd looked on men as a manager views a well filled theatre. He had little or no resentment for the vice and profligacy that was packed ready to applaud and enjoy the farce, which he had provided for it. Wordsworth looked upon them as sheep intermixed with wolves and foxes, over whom the pastoral eye and staff were constantly needed. Southey viewed them as a half breed of angel and demon, the demon sometimes overpowering the angel, and the angel occasionally subduing the demon. Godwin

looked upon a man as a fallen spirit, with all the spiritual qualities still existent, which it only required an intelligent training to restore again to life. George Dyer believed the fool, the knave, the charletan as implicitly as he did the philosopher or the divine. Lamb had none of these predilections. He had no strongly defined singularity to refer all his impressions to. He had no standard. The infinite differences of mankind sprung from so many casual circumstances, that in them alone class, section, and all that would generalize, came to nothing. Strict limitation was sure to expire in absurdity, and be continually waging its dogmas against itself. And this conclusion was the result of a thorough taste for the study of mankind, a thorough delight in tracing, as far as possible, the windings and obliquities of feeling and peculiarity. It was the bent of Lamb's mind for this study which directed his reading to those writers, who have applied their powers almost exclusively to the representation of human activity and variation. He found in their pages those fine portraits of men, that gave him a distaste for more artificial reading, and gave a kindred direction to his inclinations. From the pages of the old dramatists, he went directly to real men and women, compared the writing with the reality, and thus sorted and proved his knowledge. In this manner he combined his observation into almost a code, in which he separated the commonplace from the peculiar; and, rejecting the former as waste, he directed his attention especially to the latter. He had a group of these as his friends, and they always roused his nature, and set his intellect in motion. But, as they one by one departed, we

see what gaps they made in his enjoyment, how the world kept darkening as its windows disappeared, with almost as fearful anticipations as those that crept over the prisoner in the dungeon, whose walls advanced to crush him. "Deaths overset one," he writes to Wordsworth, "and put one out long after the recent grief. Two or three have died within this last two twelvemonths, and so many parts of me have been numbed. . . . There's Captain Burney gone! What fun has whist now, what matters it what you lead, if you can no longer fancy him looking over you? One never hears anything, but the image of the particular person occurs with whom alone almost you would care to share the intelligence,—thus one distributes oneself about—and now for so many parts of me I have lost the market. Common natures do not suffice me. Good people, as they are called, wont serve. I want individuals. I am made up of queer points, and I want so many answering needles. The going away of friends does not make the remainder more precious." Men, in whose study that of man has had a principal share, have always had somewhat of the taste of Lamb. They have always been interested in individuals to the neglect of groups. Shakspere studied groups as well as individuals; and, by transferring what was general from the groups, and mixing it with what was peculiar in the individuals, he was able, even when drawing characters of the most singular and eccentric nature, to make them our familiars, our brothers, our friends, by the common instincts which he has mixed with the uncommon peculiarities.. But this universality is given to few. Even

refined and celebrated observers of men are obliged to be satisfied with individuals; and, for want of a philosophic as well as a characteristic penetration, to amuse us with Oldbucks, Uncle Tobies, Jourdains, and De Coverleys. Lamb belongs to this class. He had a keen appreciation of any departure from the commonplace. He liked eccentrics. He sported with weakness in the same way as we sport with a child;—we love it for its very weakness, and know that that weakness may grow up into the wisdom of Plato. George Dyer, Captain Burney, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey were all mapped in Lamb's mind with their outlines as perfectly unlike as their visages. The commonplace had been purged out of all these. They were in the crowd, but not of it. They belonged to one another only in their outward forms, and might for all that have no more consent than fire has with ice, or trouble with laughter. Yet there were touches of nature that would have made Hazlitt grasp the hand of Southey, and Coleridge agree with Leigh Hunt. Lamb, when he stood among these opposite individualities as their rallying point, showed that his sympathies were large and manly, and that he understood human nature, though he understood it unconsciously and by instinct. Had he been able to give adequate expression to his feelings,—had he been able to refer them back to their source, and give their peculiarities their proper speech, and describe their course of action by finely connected side reflection, he would have done, on some scale or other, what Shakspere has done on the broadest field. But here came the difficulty. He could unite himself to the individuals, but he

never attempted to describe how that unity was accomplished. He was satisfied with the notion of the individuals, and while he was a centre round which they moved, he was content to believe in them, and read them as men as wide apart as their disinclinations fixed them.

But this respect and love for the individualities of men, freed Lamb's mind from contracted principles—left him with sympathy for opposite political parties, for opposite creeds, for any vagary which men might commit on the stage of their institutions, or on the stage of their principles. He saw the man in every weakness and folly, and the weakness or the folly rather endeared the man to him, than drove him away from him. Weakness and folly stamped if not peculiarity yet individuality on what, without it, would have been mere plodding routine, the same thing over again, which was the source of Lamb's indifference. There appears to be no knowledge which we can aim at, that comes so reluctantly to us as this knowledge of mankind; which, on a partial view, seems to be always at our side, instructing us, and working into us. We almost believe that it comes as readily as our speech, and it is nearly as much a part of our growth as a member of the body. Yet the majority of men are hardly instructed in its elements. The want of it is the source of persecution, and pride, and vainglory, and those annoying passions which men, ignorant of men, display in all their transactions with them. Had Gifford understood such a nature as that of Hazlitt, he would never have slandered it; and had Hazlitt understood Southey, he would never have hurled his tomahawk at him; and had Southey understood

Hunt, he would have dipped his pen in milk instead of gall. It was because Lamb knew all these, that he became beloved by all; and, while he never intruded on those parts of character which his knowledge showed were the vanities, and the weakness, and accidents of the men, he sported freely on whatever was common and affectionate between them.

When he left his own friends and went abroad, it was the same. The largeness of his humanity made everything, that obeyed the wearisome slavery of fashion and formality, a bore to him. He had no sympathy with those voluntary weak-minded obligations, which prescribe the manner in which you should enter a room and leave it; the law of sitting at table; and even of eating, drinking, and smoking. This was dull-minded slavery to Lamb. He never willingly mixed with company where its rules were observed, and he cast the large class of persons, whose sole interests in life consists in such melancholy conformity, among the waste and unsuggestive parts of human nature. But when he escaped from these classes, he was all life again. He found in the streets a constant supply of living interests. The beggar, the sweep, the blind, the lame, the Quaker, the Jew—whatever was out of the pale of middle class constraints, or was singular, were everlasting pages of instruction to him. In one of his essays he laments the decay of beggars. In another, in praise of chimney sweepers, he says, "I reverence these young Africans of our own growth—these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption." He could not be easy among the uniformities and insincerities

of fashion. But when he got among natural men —men who had no cause to conceal themselves in themselves, but who were accustomed to act and speak without check or balance, he was free and easy. Hence he could always find entertainment in low society, and one of his friends says that low society was necessary to him. It afforded a balance which the peculiarity of his mind required. He knew that man is only contemptible when he tries to be something different from what circumstances have made him. Where he has no temptations to put on airs and assume superiorities, he becomes the most instructive creature in nature. When he acts as a superior being, he becomes a mere variation of an animal, constantly making mistakes, and can only be classed with dancing dogs and fortune-telling ponies.

Lamb's friend, Mr. Patmore, has stated that "He was a gentle, amiable, and tender-hearted misanthrope—he hated men in his judgment; but yearned towards them in his heart." We may often try the value of a proposition by reversing it. Suppose he had loved them in his judgment, and hated them in his heart. The case stated by Mr. Patmore might have been stated of Felix Neff and John Howard. But the reverse might be stated of Dominic the Inquisitor, and Philip the Second. To hate men in your judgment is only to be conscious that they are largely compounded of those materials, which it is our very nature to hate,—which we are commanded to hate in ourselves,—which we see constantly working out in the world a quantity of results, which we know are detrimental to all that is valuable in our lives here, and

our hopes hereafter. If our judgment did not hate these things, we should be advocating a philosophy, viler than was ever proposed among the grossest of the heathens. We should be again making gods of pride, vanity, lust, lying, and stealing. These are elements rooted in our nature, which it is the province of religion to purge, correct, and humble; and we must hate them in our judgment, before the action of religion has any chance of touching them to their detriment. If, therefore, it be said that Lamb hated men in his judgment, and yearned towards them in his heart; the proposition only states that he hated the evil part of man, and loved the good.—He yearned towards them in his heart, because he saw that the hated part of them, which his judgment rejected, was less the fault of men than their misfortune,—that it was born with them,—that they had no more control over its presence than they had over the measles or the hooping cough, and that they were not only worthy of pity and help in every situation where the pity and help of one would be of benefit to another;—but that this yearning of the heart,—this pity and help, are not permitted to us as a taste; but commanded by the weakness of our nature, as a duty. Lamb's misanthropy was, on this view of it, only christianity,—only the duty of a good citizen, and a good man.

Lamb's literary taste was peculiar. Like most other points in his character, it seemed to derive little of its nature from others. It had grown up in a great measure independently, and levied little or nothing from the intercourse of friends, or the current reading of the day.

Lamb started with Coleridge; but the friends soon separated, and took widely different routes. Coleridge lost himself in the mazes of theology and German philosophy; Lamb never advanced a step among either. Though he had such reverence for Coleridge, and followed him alone among all his acquaintances; yet, in every particular of their works, Lamb has shown himself entirely disconnected from the taste or manner of his friend. Coleridge was always exceedingly decorative;—even his philosophy was not satisfied with its tub, but strained after dainty appliances. Lamb, on the contrary, detested ornament except it were useful,—he never put on a superfluous jewel, or sought to color what was naturally colorless. Hence he had little or no sympathy with the modern school of poetry, though he had studied in the same school as Coleridge, and Coleridge had given it one of its most impulsive thrusts. To Christabel we owe something more than the form of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, the Siege of Corinth, and Paradise and the Peri. Byron was to him rhodomontade. "He is great" he writes in a letter to Cottle, "in so little a way. To be a poet is to be a man, not a petty portion of occasional low passions, worked up into a permanent form of humanity. Shakspere has thrust such rubbishly feelings into a corner—the dusky heart of Don John in Much Ado." This censure, with a modicum of truth, has something that looks like prejudice. For, when we see with what delicacy and exquisite fitness Lamb uses language, how sensitive he is to the finest shades that letters can express, we are the more surprised that he should not have acknowledged that kindred excel-

lence in Byron, who often gives language the nature of a pigment, and puts down the idea with shade and color. His colors indeed are startling, and his shades as violent as those of Rembrandt; and these circumstances may have been banes to Lamb's pensive taste, which was never eruptive, never explosive or violent.

It is not surprising that Shelley,—the Delphi of the modern poets,—should have been rejected by Lamb. "I can no more understand Shelley than you can." he writes to Bernard Barton, "His poetry is thin sown with profit or delight. . . For his theories or nostrums they are oracular enough, but I either comprehend 'em not, or there is miching malice and mischief in 'em, but for the most part ringing with their own emptiness." And yet Shelley is but the highest development of the system inaugurated by Wordsworth.—The abandonment of mankind, as the worthiest subject of verse, and the substitution of nature in his stead, was the first principle of Wordsworth; and this principle Shelley only extended to the confines of the possible. He exalted nature into a goddess, and worshipped her in mysterious and indefinite language, the only vehicle that can be applied to objects, whose outlines must be composed of things seen, without being confounded with them. Though Lamb, therefore, recognized Wordsworth as a true poet of nature, he was not prepared to follow out his principles to their appointed end. In Wordsworth, nature was always the world seen and felt; in Shelley it became not only the world seen and felt; but the world remodelled and conceived. Lamb stopped where his senses stopped. He did not conceive that the

imagination had the right to alter, re-clothe, and re-embellish what was already perfect. Wordsworth himself shrunk from this extension of his poetical theory. But, having abandoned society and life, he had abandoned all the wholesome restrictions, which keep extravagance within bounds; and, though he never transgressed the limits of the true himself, he was no security for his followers; and we see that the first one of ability drove headlong forward, and substituted mere vapor and vision for the mountains, woods, fields, and tarns over which the master was wont to expatiate.

Lamb also read Southey; but it is doubtful whether he would have ever looked at Thalaba or Kehama had not their author been his friend. Southey's style was so far removed from that which Lamb thought excellent, that we hazard little in saying that, he had no real sympathy with Southey's theoretic poetry. Indeed he told Southey himself as much. Referring to the Curse of Kehama, he says, "My imagination goes sinking and floundering in the vast spaces of unopened before systems and faiths; I am put out of the pale of my sympathies, my moral sense is almost outraged; I can't believe, or, with horror am made to believe, such desperate chances against omnipotences, such disturbances of faith to the centre. . . I mention only what diminishes my delight at the wonder-workings of Kehama. . . I am at home in Spain and Christendom. I have a timid imagination; I am afraid I do not willingly admit of strange beliefs, or out of the way creeds or places. I never read books of travels, at least not farther than Paris or Rome." Here he gives us a key to one important feature in his

character,—its conservative principle. Whatever had lived long, or whatever had been associated with his early life, had received a sort of consecration. It was henceforth irremoveable from its place. London, and his favorite spot in London; the universities, old plays, old poems, old prose were things he clung to, and never abandoned. Southey's irregular ode-style, with its awful mythology, were things that innovated too much on his ideas of what poetry should be, and how it ought to deport itself.

History he hardly classed among intellectual reading. He put Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Josephus, Paley among the books that he could not read, and confounded them in the same catalogue with court calendars, directories, almanacs, science, and statutes at large. With these exceptions, he professed that he could read almost anything. But his taste inclined him especially to the old poets and dramatists. And of these he did not cling so closely to the well-known as to the half-known, or almost unknown. To be neglected was to have a title to Lamb's regard, and he was especially pleased to take a ragged vagabond book by the hand, and hear it discourse by his winter fire. Neglect, whether in human beings or in literature, had especial claims on him. Shakspere and Milton he held as we are all more or less obliged to hold them; but he had a more friendly sympathy, as he confesses, for Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley. Those he could read with the kind of feeling, which none of us is without; the feeling that our reading is not such as every body else has read; that we are in some measure on ground, which has not yet had all its game chased out of it; that

we may pick up thoughts as they came freshly to serve the desires of a society long since dead; that we are in fields, which have been neglected, not for want of grain, but because the idle generation of common readers dares only venture where every part has been explored beforehand, and every profitable corner well known.

Lamb's taste for these half-known or unknown authors, was certainly an advantage to him. He stored up all their singularities, their humors, and obsolete methods of expressing themselves. His taste directed him how to make a skilful use of these studies, and they greatly enlarged the scope and liveliness, and vigor of his writing. The old and the new are so happily blended in his best essays, that the old never seems a patch on the garment.

In prose writers, Lamb had a library of favorites; but all were individuals,—all had some singular character, that set them off in distinguishing points from their brethren. Quarles and Wither, the emblem makers; Burton, with his rambling learning and credulous anecdotes; Isaac Walton, stretching himself by brook-sides, and making even his cruel amusement attractive; Sir Thomas Browne, gleaming with a style lighted up like a funeral chamber with wax tapers, glowing from silver sconces on black drapery; Thomas Fuller, slyly laughing at the knacks and humors of men, and exhibiting them in a queer, uncommon phrase, or lively sally; Jeremy Taylor, speaking as it were from two worlds, and translating the language of heaven into that of mortals, were among his chief delights, when the fire was clear, the candles were on

the table, the rain was pouring without, and the unseasonable night gave no indication of visitors. Then he revelled in his old folios, lived over again past ages, consorted with every out of date fashion and feeling, and enjoyed one of the purest and rarest pleasures bestowed on mortals. There were others, however, stranger still to the general run of readers, which were dear to Lamb. It seemed almost a vagary to rate the Life of the Duke of Newcastle by his Duchess so highly as Lamb did. "No casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honor and keep safe such a jewel." are the words in which he has embalmed his estimation of a work, which, to most readers, would seem flat and commonplace. He had scarcely less regard for the plays, poems, discourses, and other tame effusions of the Duchess and her husband, which fill nearly a dozen volumes. John Buncle, the 'healthy' book that so puzzled the Scotchman; Sir Philip Sydney, wearying common readers with the prolixities of his Arcadia; Charles Cotton, and Andrew Marvel were also among the books which he exchanged for the Biographies, Discourses, Sermons, and Treatises, which were constantly poured into his hands from the modern press. It was the same with fiction. Though he lived in what might be termed the golden age of fiction; when it was abundant and rich, without being small, overflowing, wearisome, and immoral as it has now become; yet he scarcely ever dipped into a modern novel. Even the Waverley Novels enjoyed but a questionable reputation with Lamb. He had far more pleasure in the pages of De Foe. Speaking of his novels, he says, "In the appearance of truth, in all the incidents

and conversations that occur in them, they exceed any works of fiction I am acquainted with. It is perfect illusion. The author never appears in these self narratives (for so they ought to be called, or rather auto-biographies), but the narrator chains us down to an implicit belief in every thing he says. There is all the minute detail of a log-book in it. . . It is like reading evidence given in a court of justice." Smollett's novels, also, expanding into a vigorous narrative that never stops to run into detail, till you yawn over it; but hurries on from incident to incident, as if the author's only anxiety was to get rid of the heavy burden of his ideas, was the kind of dense reading which was to Lamb the end of a book, and especially of a novel. Fielding and Richardson also were as much regarded as Smollett. Lamb did not believe that a character had been clearly and boldly drawn in fiction since Parson Adams, Lovelace, Strap, and Corporal Trim had been left by their great describers, and had lifted our fiction to the same rank as Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Rabelais, with an additional originality, all its own.

We must not forget to notice Lamb's classical taste. His Christ Church training never left him. He always retained his classical knowledge, and he loved to use it. He wrote Latin letters to those correspondents who were likely to understand them, and he sometimes indulged in turning queer proverbs and nursery distiches into Latin. In almost every one of his essays, and in many of his letters, classical allusions are constantly reminding the reader that the author is at home in the stateliest retreats of Roman thought. But the exquisite taste of the

writer kept him from the fussy conceit of the pedant. He never introduced a word of Latin to show the world the extent of his knowledge of the language. Whenever a bit of dead language, or a classical allusion is introduced by Lamb, it comes because nothing else could so well have borne the burden of the idea; from no other source could he have so aptly told his meaning. This is true learning, and true taste.

Here we conclude. Our remarks have extended to a greater length than we intended; but they are not more extensive than the interesting subject of them deserves.

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